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# INGRAM PLACE.

VOL. I.

LONDON : PRINTED BY  
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE  
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

# INGRAM PLACE.

A NOVEL.



BY

A CAPE COLONIST.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
1874.

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# INGRAM PLACE.



## PROLOGUE.

### IN THE BLOOD.

FROM the Shannon to the Atlantic stretches the demesne of Ingram, whose crown is the Place, a stately old building, with a glorious confusion of styles. Very fair to the eye is this majestic pile, frowning down on the broad blustering Atlantic; embosomed in the dark woods that clothe its guardian hills as luxuriantly as though no mighty, treacherous, beautiful sea rolled up to their very feet, and danced and sparkled on the shining shingle which forms the western boundary of that marvellous expanse of velvet sward. Exquisitely melodious, too, with the songs of the birds, the streams, the fountains, with the chatter of the tiny baby, who makes music all day long in the grand old house,—all night in the dreams of its master.

He was a proud man, the master of Ingram Place; an aristocrat of the old type, who looked upon the earth as being made for man, and man for the convenience of the nobles. The little motherless child was dear to him, less because she was his daughter than because she was his heiress. In the dimpled despot, who exacted such implicit obedience, such slavish worship from everyone around,

and at whose baby shrine he, too, bent in homage, he recognised not the wee sweet pledge his wife had left him, not the affectionate companion of declining years, but the future Baroness Ingram, the bearer of his name and titles.

It was fortunate that the title descended to the female in default of male heirs, or Lord Ingram would never have forgiven his wife for dying without giving him a son. He felt it would be a bore to marry again, while it would be misery to think of that noble mansion and those broad lands going to a distant relation. Something of this shaped itself into words as he stood on the marble terrace, overlooking the sea in front, and at either end a vast expanse of park and dense pine groves.

‘No, I could not bear to leave it to a stranger. Ingram Place for the Ingrams; so it has been, so it shall be.’

Something of softness crept over the exquisitely chiselled features, something came into the steely blue eyes that at other moments they lacked, as into that gorgeous picture of wood, and grass, and sea there came a thing fairer than bird or flower, yet seeming to partake of the nature of both—the baby heiress of Ingram.

She was a tiny child, with fair, delicate skin, that took a faint rose-blush under the great grey-black eyes. Soft, bright curls fell from under the little hat on round, white shoulders, like marble, but the thick, heavy lashes were black as jet. Flitting to and fro amongst the flowers that bright June afternoon, the grave, solemn depths of baby wisdom that lurked in the dark eyes were hidden in the glimmer of the sunlight.

‘Ingram Place for the Ingrams,’ he repeated. Even as he spoke the child disappeared with her nurse, and he re-entered his study.

‘There’s a tramp at the front entrance, my lord, who says he must see you.’

‘A tramp, who must see me!’ ejaculated Lord Ingram, expressing in his tones the immeasurable surprise no words could do justice to. The crimson hangings that softened the light of the gorgeous library vibrated at the sound, and the stern visages of the O’Regan Ingrams poured down a sterner frown at the sleek servitor, who murmured, in his most soothing tones,

‘Yes, my lord—but he insisted on my telling your lordship.’

‘Insisted on your disobeying me?’ said Lord Ingram, with freezing hauteur, his clear tones all the more imperious for being so icily cold. ‘I shall instruct Bayley to give you a quarter’s salary; I have no further need of you.’

‘If your lordship pleases, I told him it would cost me my place, and he said——’

‘I really must be excused hearing your conversation second-hand,’ interrupted the peer, in accents of supreme indifference. ‘You may go.’

Watkins bowed and withdrew, and Lord Ingram resumed his writing. Again he was disturbed.

‘Since you do not seem to understand my orders, Watkins,’ he remarked, without looking up, ‘I must request you to apply at once to Bayley for your money.’

Watkins did not answer; did not make even the faintest attempt at an apology; and Lord Ingram looked up. No sleek, well-appointed valet stood there, but a travel-stained, ragged man; a man on whose countenance and attire vice had set her brand; a tramp confessed, every inch of him, and not a pleasant-looking tramp either.

Lord Ingram's first idea was to ring. His hand was already on the bell-rope when it was arrested by the tramp, who severed the cord with a sharp knife, and at the same instant locked the door, while Lord Ingram stood lost in surprise, powerless to act till it was too late.

'Do you know where you are, fellow?' demanded the nobleman, haughtily; not a shadow of fear on his handsome face, not a tremor disturbing the iron-grey moustache that shaded his short upper lip, or stirring the thin locks that fell over the broad temples; only pride, stern, uncompromising pride, lurking like a shadow of evil in the cold clear eyes, dilating the delicate well-shaped nostrils, curving the nether lip.

'Are you afraid of me, Lord Ingram?' queried the tramp bitterly, extending his empty hands to show he was unarmed.

'Afraid of you? I?' said Lord Ingram, with all the concentrated contempt the aristocrat of a line of fifty ancestors can feel for the untutored plebeian who presumes to draw a comparison between himself and his superior, in his cold voice. 'Leave the house instantly, or you shall dearly rue this insolence.'

'No, not yet; not till you have heard me.'

'You will regret this, depend upon it.'

'What have I done? My lord, I have come in at the front instead of the back; I have cut a rope that it will cost you a few shillings to replace; but I could not have spoken to you otherwise, and am I to stick at trifles when my child's life hangs on your words? Oh, my lord, pause before you throw an unstained soul amongst the scum of the convict station. It is not for the hell of seven years, though that can make a hardened sinner like me tremble,

but it is the long afterwards. Oh, my lord justice, think of the afterwards ; what is to become of her then ?’

‘How long am I to endure this ?’ demanded Lord Ingram, measuring the stalwart figure that barred his way to the door.

‘My lord, if I have offended you forgive me,’ said the tramp penitently, ‘and consider what madness you might commit, if eternal misery threatened your daughter, your only one, if she were led into temptation by those who should shield her, if her one protector were for two years beyond the sea, tied hand and foot in chains himself had forged, while she was lured on to be a tool, to take what wasn’t hers to help a comrade out of trouble——’

‘There is no such word as stealing in your vocabulary,’ interrupted the peer sarcastically.

‘Well, my lord, to steal, to become a thief; would you be delicate about begging that she might not for that one offence be ruined for ever, that through all eternity she might not reproach you with her damnation ?’

‘Silence, sirrah !’ and the slumbering volcano of indignation broke forth. ‘Do you suppose that I shall stand here and permit you to institute comparisons between your daughter and the future Baroness Ingram, or have you the unpardonable insolence to suppose that my daughter could ever sully herself with the crimes that belong by nature to the rabble ?’

‘I don’t suppose any such thing, my lord. Surrounded with all that is pure and holy, every want anticipated, every fancy gratified lawfully, what could tempt *your* daughter to stain her hand with theft ? But put her in the haunts of vice, set her down, bound and fettered by her youth and helplessness, in the same horrible surroundings ;



let her hear goodness jeered at, and wickedness, lying, trickery held up as cleverness; and I tell you that she will sink as low in the mire as though she were of the veriest plebeian mud.'

Fire darted from the keen blue eyes of the outraged noble; the veins on his forehead stood out like whipcord.

'Insolent!' he exclaimed. 'Quit the house at once.'

There was something superbly regal in his lofty indignation, as he repudiated by his contemptuous silence on the subject all comparison between his daughter and that man's child.

'I cannot, Lord Ingram. Great Heaven! I cannot go away quietly. Only consider, if you have any pity for the young and helpless, what is to become of my poor girl. Will you bid her be an outcast for ever—for ever, for in this world or the next she will never shake off the chain seven years will forge? Will you do this when you consider what her life has been? Oh, my lord, I implore you remember whose child she is.'

'I do remember, I assure you,' said Lord Ingram with haughty disdain.

'A thief when not a convict, a convict when not a thief. What could she be with such a father?'

'What, indeed? That is my view of the case exactly, and the sooner the country is rid of the offspring of such as you the better. The sooner the progeny of convicts are crushed out of existence like the eggs of a brood of vipers, the better for the respectable portion of the community. I would trample as remorselessly on the one as the other, for the badness is in the blood, and only death can kill it.'

A strange glazed look began to come over the burning

eyes of the tramp, as he gazed into the nobleman's cold, passionless face.

'Is that it? You think it's in the blood it is?'

'From one generation to another, from father to son, mother to daughter, the degradation deepens.'

'But her mother—' and the tramp spoke humbly again. 'Oh, my lord, her mother was an honest woman, a gentle, true-hearted woman; it can't be the blood, or her child could not be tempted. For her sake, in pity to her mother's heart looking down from heaven, be merciful. What am I to say to her, when she asks me for her daughter?'

'That she acted according to her nature. Bah! I know you, one and all.'

'So it's the blood is it?' and again the glazed look came over the burning eyes. 'Well then, forgive my girl for being what she could not help, and the Lord have mercy upon you.'

The Lord Chief Justice froze into very ice. Mercy on him? What need had he of mercy? The tramp followed up the unfortunate appeal.

'I will pray night and day that your child may never know sin or shame if you will only give my girl one chance to be honest.'

'You may spare yourself the trouble of such prayers; my daughter is an Ingram.'

'And can never fall? I tell you, proud man, you lie. I tell you that the day may come to her when such prayers will be as sorely needed as though she was but a pauper. I tell you that your blood is no barrier against crime and disgrace—look to it, my lord, look to it.'

There was frenzy in the passionate repudiation of the divine right of blood, frenzy in the hoarse utterance, in the

rolling eye, but it did not move that haughty man. His heart was stone to his brother. The tramp went on.

‘If you only knew how in my deepest sin I strove to keep her pure, how in my chains in a foreign land I looked across thousands of miles at the one sinless being who would touch my hand, how I turned to her memory in the moment of desperation, and refrained from deadlier crime, how I plotted and planned to save and steal that she might go live with honest people, where she would be what I might have been, how my one dream was to worship her goodness, to marry her to an honest man, you would understand that you hold two souls in your hand. Your child is dear to you, but can’t you see mine must be dearer to me? for you have rank, wealth, a name, friends; I have nothing else in the world that isn’t tainted of hell.’

The piteous appeal was unheeded. Lord Ingram’s face grew hard and cold again; oh, so hard, so pitiless, as a man’s face should never be to his brother. Loathing contempt he felt for the returned convict, who presumed to place his daughter in comparison with the heiress of Ingram, who coupled crime with the name of the latter, as though such a connection were possible.

‘I can endure this no longer; my patience is at an end, and, once for all, I tell you that my decision is unalterable.’

There was something in the cold indifferentism of the metallic tones more chilling than the concise brevity of the sentence, that told plainly there could be no sympathy between noble and tramp.

‘Lord Ingram, I could kill you where you stand.’

His lordship started. There was no doubt of that; he started unmistakably. He was no coward; he was no

living slur on the world-renowned courage of the O'Regan Ingrams; but there was something in the unholy glare of those eyes that made his patrician pride quail.

'I could, I could,' pursued the tramp bitterly, 'but I will not, no I will not; I must have a sweeter revenge. I could kill you, but that would not save my child; it would not shield me from the flames that are now licking me with their forked tongues, and it would be putting you out of my reach too soon; it would be giving you too easy a punishment, when seven years' transportation is meted out to an ignorant, deluded girl. I could strangle you now; I could squeeze out your life with these bony fingers—they are strong enough for that—but I will not. I will do better; I will squeeze out your life by inches; I will curse you.'

Lord Ingram strove in vain to shake off the creeping horror that assailed him. He stood spell-bound; he shrank from touching that loathly object; though he would fain have dashed down the uplifted hand, and stemmed the torrent of words with the nervous grip of his slender white fingers.

'May you live to see your child a shame and a disgrace. May you live to see her soul tainted with blackness, as foul as that which will stain my girl seven years from to-day. May she be as unable to turn to honesty and decency, as hopeless and hapless an outcast in this world and the next. May you live to see and know this. May you live to be the thing I am, a wretched, guilty man, with sin upon your head and misery in your heart, and your one guiding star that might have saved you plunged in infamy. May you live to this, as I tell you you will, and you will then see whether your blood will save you in the hour of temptation. Oh, my lord,' and the tramp suddenly broke down, 'I did not

come to curse, I came to beg. Think what it is in your power to do. You can save me—will you not?’

No answer. That haughty man could not overlook the presumption that ignored his rank, that fronted him to a beggar, as a man to a man with no distinction between them, that, fraught with supreme agony, only recognised in him a fellow. No answer to that cry for help, that wailing appeal from a soul not altogether bad; only a cold, supercilious stare of indifference and scorn.

It was sad to see; oh, very sad to see. The one inexorable as Fate, assuming a relentless hardness; a man, a mere frail man, taking upon him the dread attributes a Deity exercises with pity. The other hardening under the fatal truth, hardening into something harder than adamant; colder than ice, yet tortured with a consuming fire of hate and misery. Sad to see, sad to see.

Again he muttered, as if in thought,

‘I could kill you—I could, but I will not. No, I will do better. Good-bye, my lord. I leave you my legacy.’

Slowly and wearily he turned away. No hope in life now; no purpose, but one crude and vague, that yet might shape into something terribly comforting. He was gone, and Lord Ingram was left undisputed master of his own house.

‘I did well to refuse him,’ muttered the peer, as if arguing with himself. ‘The rabble are gaining too much head-way. It is time they were put down.’

## CHAPTER I.

JENNY JOY AND JENNY JOICE. IN THE LATIN.

Come to Court, Jenny Joy, Jenny Joy;  
 Come to Court, Jenny Joy.  
 How's she to day?

WILD, weird children's voices sang out the sweet refrain in the deserted old Latin down by the canal of Dromore. The childish melody floated away over the water, nestling among the trees that lined the banks, dying away in echoes innumerable till taken up by the answering chorus.

Bold, merry, dark-eyed children they were; some with an attempt at respectability visible, others utterly vagabond. As the old play goes on, the ragged urchins simulate grief with a marvellous amount of histrionic power. Born actors every one of them, quick to feel rather than to feign, their impulsive, passionate natures seem to catch instantaneously the tinge of the emotion expressed.

Who that has seen a group of Irish children playing this game, does not remember the countless witty subterfuges by which the mother evades the importunate demands of those lordly gallants from Spain? But at last the climax is reached, and Jenny Joy must run to avoid being buried by her disconsolate suitors. Away she flies, like a hunted hare, and the Latin is quiet no longer.

In this very old game the best runner is always Jenny Joy, so as to tax the ingenuity of her pursuers to the utmost. In this case the fugitive was a very good runner

indeed; she doubled upon her pursuers with amazing rapidity, her breath came and went in short gasps, her face grew strangely white, as though it were a matter of life and death; yet still she kept on. Suddenly a wild shriek burst from her lips, as, with a triumphant shout, one of the players seized her by the shoulders; a shudder convulsed her frame, and she stood helpless and shuddering.

‘Go away, go away,’ said the girl who had been the mother, addressing her companions, who stood curiously round. ‘I told you not to make her play.’

‘What’s she more than any of us?’ retorted a handsome, bold-faced girl. ‘We’re not going to have any fine-lady airs from people that live in the thieves’ Latin.’

‘She shall be a lady if she likes, do you hear?’ was the fierce reply. ‘And she shan’t run again unless she’s a mind to. What do you say to that?’

She was a wee mite of a thing, with tiny feet and tinier hands, and great black eyes that flashed wickedly under the strongly-arched eyebrows; a swarthy, elfish-looking creature, with a rare crown of jet-black hair, gathered in tangled masses at the back of her head.

‘Why shouldn’t Balfe’s daughter take her turn as well as the rest of us?’ demanded another angrily.

‘Take her turn?’ repeated the elf with supreme contempt, ‘when you make her run every time. She does take her turn and your’s too, but she shan’t again.’

There were rebellious mutterings in the throng, but they did not in the least daunt the elf.

‘Only let me catch one of you making her,’ she said. ‘Now go away.’

Grumbling, muttering, yet subdued, the children moved away to another part of the Latin, where they might pursue

their games free from the glare of the black eyes. Then the elf twined her arms round her trembling companion, and drew her with wonderful gentleness to the mossy hillock under the great beech tree.

‘What is it, alanna machree?’ she said in strangely musical tones.

‘I can’t do it,’ said the girl, sobbing hysterically. ‘It seemed so real, oh! so dreadfully real; just as I’ve dreamed it over and over. Sure I knew it wasn’t true, but I couldn’t let them catch me; it hurts me so here,’ and she pressed her hand to her heart.

As peculiarly fair as her small protector was sallow, with only a faint tint on the transparent cheeks, and great grey eyes that appeared black under their heavy fringes, she looked a fragile, helpless creature to battle single-handed with life. Her features were singularly delicate, and around the curves of the small mouth there lurked sad lines and shadows of age in youth. Her timid, nervous air formed a striking contrast to the bold defiance characterising the gipsy; the almost forbidding sternness of the brown face only redeemed at times by the glorious light that flashed from the midnight eyes, the sweet, strange smile that hovered round the small mouth as if longing to make its home there.

‘They shan’t make you play any more.’

‘But they will.’

‘I tell you no; if they do——’

‘They’ll only plague me when you’re away,’ was the disconsolate reply. ‘Don’t make them angry.’

‘What a little coward you are.’

‘Sure I am, but I can’t help it; I wish I was like you, but I’m not a bit,’



‘Indeed you’re not, praises for that same. But, you little stupid, why don’t you stop and not run at all?’

‘I can’t, I feel like running for my life. It’s so like my dreams, I must run on.’

‘Well, it’s regular fun to me to make them all stiff; it’s downright delicious to see how disappointed they look when they think they’ve got you and haven’t. I tell you what, Kate agra, in the fox-chases it isn’t the hunters have all the fun. I wouldn’t mind bein’ the fox, and wouldn’t I lead ’em a chase.’

‘Oh, I wish I was like you.’

‘And I wish you weren’t, so I have my wish and you haven’t. You must always be like yourself and nobody else, but better like anybody than me. I don’t know how it is, but it’s worse I get every day, just as that man gets more aggravating.’

‘Does he?’

‘Does he? Doesn’t he?’ and the weird elfishness of her look intensified as she spoke the words bitterly. ‘But I pay him off, alanna machree, trust me for that; it’s only right that I should, you know.’

But though she spoke confidently she looked questioningly into the sad, troubled face that gleamed so sweetly from its framework of tangled hair.

‘I don’t know’ said the girl, with a painful consciousness of something she had dreamt or learnt long ago. ‘I couldn’t do it, but that’s because I’m such a coward, I daren’t.’

‘No, no, I’ll tell you why it is: it’s because you’re a lady born, and you can’t do the bad, vulgar things me and the other girls do. I always said you were a lady, and so you are, and nothing will make anything else of you.’

Kate looked down at her torn dress, her stockingless feet, encased in broken slippers, her bare arms and her soiled hands, with a keen sense of the ludicrous. Smiles rippled over the face lately washed with tears, whose effects were still visible in countless patches.

'Now you're going to tell me it's the grand people who wear silk and satin that are the ladies, but I don't believe a word of it. There's many a duchess, my dear, would give her ears to be as pretty as you.'

'I'd like to be a duchess.'

'So would I,' assented the elf approvingly. 'Gracious! wouldn't I make the money fly? What dresses I'd have to go to parties every night.'

'It's not that I'd care so much for,' and again the shadow pressed heavily on the young brow. 'But I need never be afraid then.'

'What makes you think so much of an odd blow?' demanded the elf curiously. 'I wouldn't mind it a bit. Couldn't you fling the stool at him next time? Just to try your hand?'

'Oh, I couldn't.'

'Just to try? Well, it's the easiest thing in the world when you get your hand in. I tell you what; I'll take him in hand.'

'No, no, no,' ejaculated the girl. 'Besides, he doesn't hit me, he only says he will; it's the thought of it more than anything else.'

'Well, it can't last for ever. If the worst comes to the worst, you know, he can't live always.'

'Oh! Jenny.'

'It's no harm saying it,' retorted Miss Joice defiantly. 'Unfortunately, it won't hurry it. But sure there's no need

to wait for that? It's long ago I made up my mind to run away. I'd do it now, only I haven't plagued *him* enough yet. I must give him a taste of the other place before I go.'

'But, Jenny,' said her friend timidly, 'he's your father, Jenny.'

'No, he's not,' said the little creature fiercely, 'he's no father to me; but I'll tell you what he is—the murderer of my mother. Oh, Kate, I know it's a bad, wicked wretch I am, but think of my poor mother dying broken-hearted at the Shivers. Sure he killed her, as much as if he had stabbed her with the knife; only it wasn't altogether and over, but by inches.'

Two large tears stood in the black eyes, softening their lurid splendour into a wondrous beauty. Not another word was uttered, but there was indescribable sympathy between these two ragged, untidily-dressed girls, with their unkempt hair and dirty faces. By-and-by the shadows warned them to go, and they rose regretfully.

'I suppose you must go,' said Miss Joice dolefully; 'and as you're going I'll go too. If it was me was told to be in, I'd let them see I liked staying out.'

They walked slowly, for they were loth to return to the thieves' quarter, its grimy filth and squalid misery, walked slowly along the softly carpeted old Latin. It was a broad strip of ground, shut in from the road by a high wall, and sweeping down in grassy luxuriance to the river-side. How it had received its strange name no one knew, unless it might be from the college boys, whose lawn stretched along the other bank of the canal; but it had been called the Latin from time immemorial, and nobody thought of changing the quaint title. Stray willows kissed the placid murmuring waters very lovingly, and here and

there tall beeches raised their heads, like giant guardians, transfixed long ago by some magic spell, and only waiting the word to revive to life.

A young lady and an elderly gentleman were walking down the Latin, and after them trooped the band of vagrants, attracted as much by the rich dress and glistening jewellery as by the hope of profit, clamouring for alms. The gentleman was singularly handsome; every one of the clearly-cut features was stamped with a patrician grace that proclaimed him an aristocrat; not one of those persons who are born merely to a name and an estate, a caricature on the world's greatness; but one of Nature's pets, aristocrat in face, in form, in manner, almost in mind. If he was not quite *comme-il-faut* in the latter it did not so much matter, you know, because nobody knew, and therefore nobody ever told it. He was singularly proud, too, as you could tell by one glance at his faultless profile. The young lady was of a very different style; her features were as irregular as her companion's were perfect, but the ragged throng took no note of that; they gaped, open-mouthed, at the brilliant complexion, the glossy, golden, rippling hair, the large grey eyes, the fresh rosy lips, and gleaming teeth. It was a joyous piquant face; with delicate dark eyebrows that had a tinge of gold, and eyelashes that were almost black. Irresistible drollery looked out of her eyes, and prompted her, quite as much as did charity, to take out her purse, and scatter a handful of coins among the vagabonds in embryo. Noticing that the two girls, who stood apart, had nothing, she held out some money. Kate shrank back with instinctive delicacy, perhaps timidity; but Miss Joice fixed her bright black eyes on the stranger, whose face, and curls, and shining silken dress had spellbound her for a moment,

and replied, with a dignity that would have been ludicrous had it not been so earnest,

‘We didn’t beg from you. Keep your money for them that want it.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ and the offending vision of beauty glanced from one to the other. ‘I did not mean you were beggars; I thought——’

‘That we’d take what we’d get and say nothing,’ interposed Jenny, considerably mollified; ‘but you see we can’t, because we’re ladies just as much as you; at least, Kitty is. She was born a lady, though she hasn’t silk dresses and pretty hats; and I’m trying to be one because she is, only I wasn’t born one, you see, and it comes hard at first.’

An irrepressible smile betokened the young lady’s amusement. The taller girl caught it, and shrank farther back.

‘I believe those persons do not require your charity, Miss Ingram,’ said the gentleman, in a cold, quiet voice, glancing from the canal in the direction of the girls; over them, behind them, somewhere into them it might be, but not at them.

‘You will accept a present, then?’ and Miss Ingram glanced with a comical mixture of amusement and pity at the pinched faces and ill-clad figures. Kate never heard her—her eyes, wistful and beseeching, were fixed on the gentleman, who again listlessly counted the waves of the canal, and calculated how many ripples would pass him as he stood there, and her face wore the white fixed look it had when the pain came to her heart—but Jenny drew herself up proudly.

‘No, thank you.’

'Oh, the ladies of the Thieves' Latin don't take money, Miss,' shouted the children mockingly; 'but we do, and thank your ladyship.'

'I am ready, uncle.'

He turned, glancing as he did so at the eyes whose steadfast gaze drew his. He stopped for an instant, looking into the white, pitiful face; then he moved away, wondering why he should be disturbed.

'How white and hungry that girl looks, uncle.'

'Hungry? Yes, I suppose that's it. Why did you not give her something?'

'They would neither of them take anything. Strange, was it not? She was born a lady, the little one said; very like a witch that girl, her eyes make one queer.'

'Born a lady and hungry?' and the gentleman stopped. 'What nonsense you talk. How could that be?' and he went on again. 'Hungry perhaps, but if so why not take money? I suppose they are so used to it they don't mind it.'

'I don't think it was that, uncle. I think they both were hungry, but something kept them from accepting charity.'

'Do not get such notions, Miss Ingram. What should prevent them taking relief if they wanted it?'

What, indeed? What could the lower orders want with such things as decent pride and honest shame? What should they have to do with self-respect or appearances?

'Well, uncle, I could imagine myself in their place, too proud——'

'You will be good enough to recollect that I tolerate neither witticisms nor comparisons. If the girl was hungry she would have accepted your charity.'

So he stifled the voice that prompted him to go back and see if he could not shed one ray of sunshine across that lonely life, and the girl walking by his side was chilled. She could not tell that he was arguing with himself rather than her.

On, on, counting the ripples as he passed, wondering how many would come and go as he walked there, wondering how many would come and go when he was gone, and unable to get rid of the strange pang caused by the sight of a girl's hungry face.

'Didn't I do right?' asked Jenny, glancing protectingly at her friend. 'My lady, my precious, pale lady, you're not vexed I didn't take the money?'

'No, no, only I feel so miserable; if I could only speak one word, and be answered.'

'Speak to who, dear?'

But she could not explain the vague longing, the inexpressible yearning, the foolish fancies. She could only shake her head, and glance back at the pair walking in the Latin.

'The fact is,' said Miss Joice decidedly, 'you're moped to death at your place. A good row would do you all the good in the world. I just wish that fellow would have at you when you get in.'

Kate shuddered all over.

'Don't say that,' she exclaimed, with a superstitious terror of her friend's witch-like power of realising her wishes.

'Well, no, avourneen, not if you don't like it. But wait till I get home. It's as miserable as yerself ye've made me; and see if my place isn't alive in half an hour.'

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## CHAPTER II.

## NO USE TRYING.

THE Thieves' Quarter, or the Thieves' Latin, as it was sometimes designated, was not very far from the end of the Latin walk. Clusters of crazy evil-looking houses overlooked and overlapped narrow dark streets; from attic to basement squalour reigned and misery revelled. The endmost house seemed to merge into the dirty clay of a brickfield, and standing out against the bare landscape and wintry sky were the remains of three round towers. The one nearest to the Quarter was Balfe's, the middle one was unoccupied, being the worst, the farthest was designated the Shivers, and was separated from the rest by a yellow, sluggish stream.

Who was Balfe?

Read the records of the times, get some antiquary to let you peep into a file of old south-country papers, and you will find endless full, true, and particular accounts, word-portraits, minute, graphic, bold or detailed, of Balfe the robber; the boldest and most defiant of all that ever became the terror of a country; caring for no decree except to exercise his ingenuity in circumventing it; converting the very officers of the law into his tools and unwitting accomplices.

The tower that formed his dwelling was a crazy-looking building like a windmill, with rude beams placed as supports against the wall, and consisted of three stories with one room on each story. In the lowest apartment Balfe sat brooding by the fire. Very powerful was his gigantic



frame, his big, muscular hands, his head with its ferocious mass of unkempt hair, black as night. There was power in the massive chin, in the square forehead; a wonderful amount of energy, fierce but suppressed, lurked in the deep-set eyes. There was nothing vacillating about the man; he was not one who mocked the devil. He was one who sinned with a will, and defrauded everyone but his master.

He turned sharply round as the door was timidly opened.

‘What is it you’re up to?’ he demanded. ‘What did I tell you?’

‘I didn’t think you’d be back so soon, father. I’ll have supper directly.’

‘Never mind the supper. Where have you been?’

‘On the Latin.’

‘What doing? Nothing for your livelihood, I’ll be bound.’

‘No.’

‘No? To be sure not. Well, you’ll have to be more active from this date, and if you don’t do it handy you’ll get your neck in the rope, that’s all. How would you like to swing like that fool I took you to see the other day?’

She grew deathly pale as that awful dread rose up before her; but she busied herself in preparing the rude supper, and there was even some little attempt at neatness.

‘Do you remember how hideously black he looked when the cap fell off? Do you remember his eyeballs, his tongue?’

He seemed to take a fiendish pleasure in gloating over her terror, in painting more vividly the images that haunted her life, that dogged her footsteps day and night.

'Well, that was the penalty he paid, not for thieving, mind you, but for being found out. Who was on the Latin?'

'Jenny Joice.'

'She, the witch? Of course she was there, but you know very well it's not her I mean.'

'There was a gentleman and a lady.'

'What? And not a purse? Not a pocket-handkerchief even?'

'I couldn't,' she said faintly.

'Why not?' and he rose from the chair. 'Are you going to tell me, as you did one day, that you want to be honest? I tell you I would kill you—kill you, do you hear—before I would let you be honest. Sin, steal, lie, thief, drink, if you will, but let no one of my name prate about honesty. Why, you could not be honest if you would. The very angels of heaven would flout you in that dress!'

'No, no, no,' she interrupted eagerly. 'The man said it didn't matter bein' poor and bad.'

'What man?'

'The man at the fair.'

'Ay, ay; I watched you while you drank in his smooth talk open-mouthed, and you, poor fool, believing every word he said, as if he wasn't saying it for money. Why, girl, I tell you if you went to that man, and asked him to help you to be honest, he would laugh in your face, and button up his pockets, and keep you at a seemly distance. But while a crowd of wretches stand round him, he will tell them glib enough that they can be honest and good, ay, and be just as glib to soothe the money out of their pockets; and when the coppers are gone he carries his smooth lies to another place. I have no coppers to get, so

I can afford to tell the truth, and I tell you that such as you and me can't be good, can't be honest. An angel from heaven couldn't raise you up, and the people of this world wouldn't let you rise if you could. You're not wanted to be good, you wouldn't be let. Heaven wouldn't, earth wouldn't, hell wouldn't let you; and what are you to set yourself against three worlds?'

It was in vain she strove to recall the earnest words, the voice that rang with truth and power. Nearer, stronger, was the stern sophistry that demolished the beautiful fabric she had been erecting on such slight grounds, the wondrous hope that even such as she might become by some unknown means good, fit to walk about amongst honest people. The shadow of her life settled down upon her heavier and more oppressive.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### MISS JOICE AT HOME.

Who had given the Shivers its name was never very clearly understood, but it was as applicable as if bestowed by a bishop. There was a peculiar shivery dampness about the whole place, that infected everything in it with the exception of the two occupants. It was the ghost of one of the round towers that had been drowned in that marshy brickfield; its thick walls had an unsubstantial slimy appearance, as though a summer sun would dissolve them; the earthen floor of the lower room was clayey, and had a peculiar graveyard odour. The loose rafters that formed

the roof of this apartment and the floor of another were disconnected, and had a rotten, mouldy appearance. This upper room was lofty, the floor of the third chamber being gone, and through openings in the roof the stars twinkled down.

‘I just don’t believe a word of it, because he says it. What should he speak the truth for, I’d like to know?’

It was the elf who spoke. Kate had taken advantage of her father’s absence to go to Jenny, guessing her father would be out too, and she related to her Balfie’s opinion. Miss Joice received it with the utmost contempt.

‘And why shouldn’t we be good if we like?’ she continued defiantly. ‘But tell me more about that man that told you all those fine things. What did he say? I’ll believe him.’

‘He said that we could all be good if we tried, even the worst of us; that some one would help us.’

‘Of course, that’s the sort of person I believe; and oh, my dear, my mother was good. What else?’

‘He said it was a nice thing to be honest; that it was wicked to steal; that it was better to do without things than to take them.’

‘Dear! Did he say that too?’ said Miss Joice doubtingly; then the swarthy face grew thoughtful, and the black eyes sought to read the mystery in the little fire, that flickered frantically in a vain contest with the surrounding dampness.

‘I wonder why?’

Kate could not tell, so she said nothing. The eight-day clock on the wall, battered and worn, ticked with a faint hollow sound, as damp a tick as could be, ‘I wonder why.’

'You know that my mother was good,' said Jenny suddenly, 'so she ought to know, and she always said the same. I don't see why, when I've nothing and other people lots, I shouldn't help myself, but my mother used to tell me to try for her sake to be good. Somehow, that man's always so aggravating. I never wanted to, but for her sake I will. How did he say?'

'I can't tell just,' Kate explained. 'He said a great deal, and I didn't forget; but I can't tell you, it was in long words, some of it.'

Then Jenny's thoughts travelled back, and her eyes grew soft with tears, except now and then a bitter light shot athwart her face.

'What a wicked wretch I am,' she said penitently. 'Just like this my mother and me used to sit, and she had a sweet face, like you, too, and she used to tell me that God did not love people who stole and told lies. She was always good, and I meant to be like her, and,' she added with energy, 'I will.'

'How brave you are,' said Kate admiringly.

'Yes, I'll set about it directly. I'll be respectable, see if I don't. I won't steal any more for *him*, that I can tell you. That man at the fair must be a good man, Kate; he talks like my mother. I'll go to him.'

'He's gone.'

'Dear, dear, what a bother. I'd like to set about it at once. It'll please my darling up there, and won't it aggravate him?'

Then she travelled back again to the days so dearly remembered now, and she dwelt lovingly on the words of the mother, on her ways, and habits, and manners, ending with,

‘My mother was so respectable, and I mean to be too. Couldn’t you remember anything else that man said? Try.’

‘No; only that we should try to go to church, and that we’d hear more there.’

‘Did he say that too? My mother used to go to church, always, when she was a girl. Well, we’ll go to church.’

‘We—go—to church?’

‘Yes; won’t it be fun?’

‘Daddy’d never let me.’

‘Of course he wouldn’t. Won’t it make them outrageous? The day after to-morrow is Sunday, and we’ll go.’

‘But ——’

‘Now don’t you want to hear what we’re to do to be respectable?’

‘Yes, but ——’

‘So do I. I want to be like my darling, and so I’m going.’

Kate’s own strong desire to see the inside of a church, to hear something more of the incomprehensible things she had heard, conquered her natural cowardice; and the girls with the understanding that they would go.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW JENNY GOT READY FOR CHURCH.

THERE was something wonderfully enchanting to Jenny in this going to church in defiance of the storm of wrath it would inevitably evoke, something inexpressibly delicious

in the preparations she was making for the act before the Otter's very eyes.

She opened the damp press with the rickety key that grated a rusty greeting to the lock in token of long absence. Memories of the absent mother poured thick and fast around her, blinding her even to tears by their ineffable sweetness, as she bent tenderly over the rusty lock, loth to force it, loth to do anything ungentle to the simplest thing that had been hallowed by the touch of hands now at rest for ever.

'What are you doing there, you imp? Leave off ransacking that place.'

The good fit passed from Jenny like the night dew before the sultry breath of the simoom, and with a vigorous twist she turned the key. The doors flew open, and revealed the shelves almost bare.

Like a fury she turned on her father.

'Thief, thief and murderer, how dare you rob the dead? They weren't your things and they weren't mine—they were hers.'

He was a slimy, disagreeable-looking man. Whether he got his damp look from his premises, or the latter from him, was never accurately known, any more than who had first given him his appropriate nickname. He *was* an otter. Smooth and slippery, he looked as if he had just emerged from some dank pool; he was hard to hold and difficult to catch. Notoriously a robber and a river smuggler, he yet lived openly at the Shivers, luxuriating in its watery atmosphere; and nobody was able to affix with certainty any one particular crime that might dislodge him, though hundreds were morally certain of his participation in different transactions.

'Be quiet, whisht, I tell you,' he said, with an evil look in the humid eyes, a look that brought lines on the repulsively smooth, oily face. 'Keep a civil tongue in yer head.'

'I will when yo've killed me, as ye killed my mother, not till then.'

There was something so fearfully vindictive in the wee creature's blazing eyes that he dropped his uplifted hand with a shudder.

'Hit me, hit me, do !' she said passionately. 'I tell you I'll give you no peace till you kill me—or I kill you.'

He turned away from the glittering eyes that somehow exerted a strange influence over him. The elf knew her power, and pursued him with her gaze.

'I can afford to speak well of you then,' and a demoniac laugh of derisive contempt issued from the child lips, 'and tell what a loving daughter I was to you, an' how affectionate we lived together, an' oh, so respectable. There'd be no one to contradict me, you know.'

It was not pity, it was not consideration for her woful ignorance and wretchedness, that kept that low-browed, smooth-faced man from striking her with his heavy, clammy hand. It was a strange mixture of remorse and superstitious fear to which the girl owed her impunity; she was quickwitted enough to detect and appreciate his motives, and to use them to her purpose. He muttered an angry oath and went out, and Jenny turned with a full heart to the rifled press.

Almost everything was gone. The faded dresses that it had been sacrilege to touch save with reverent care, the shawl worn that never to be forgotten once, when the mother had taken her little black-eyed girl to a church far away, where she had dropped tears on the child's hand all



the while, and pointed out to Jenny's greedy eyes the place—high up among well-dressed people—where she had sat with her mother when a girl; where they had lingered after the service, loth to leave its memory-peopled aisles, until the grey-headed minister, passing down, had detected the shrinking figures, and fancying they needed help had not passed by on the other side, but had come straight towards them! Ah! Jenny the orphan, witch and evil eye as they called her, never looked at that shawl but she saw the kindly smile of recognition, the tears that stood in the old man's eyes as he asked the mother where she had been since the day he married her, the way in which he shook hands as if with a real lady. She never folded or refolded the thin texture without feeling the kindly touch of his hand upon her head. But she would never fold it again; no, never, it was gone. So were the petticoats she had never had the heart to starch and iron, the boots that would have made her so decent for church; nothing left but a few trifles, a pair of gloves, a little black hat, and a tiny pair of slippers. Her heart swelled at the desolate sight, but she dashed away the scalding tears and locked the shaky press. Looking through the place she caught sight of a great, heavy overcoat on a peg high up out of her reach; a warm, comfortable coat, that had not yet caught the prevailing dampness.

'O that's it, is it?' and the tears burst out afresh; 'it was to make his ugly carcass warm that he took her things. Wait—I'll match him.'

Standing on the table wouldn't do it, nor yet putting the chair up; no, nor even when the stool was put on that. It was very tantalising. There, almost within reach, was the tail of the coat, and strive as she would she could not

even touch it. Then she tried to poke it down with a stick; but the coat was too heavy and refused to descend.

She came down furious.

‘If I was only a bit taller—ah! I have it.’

It was a cold, wet Saturday night, but in an instant she was off.

‘Kitty, I just want you a minit.’

She was sitting listlessly by the fire, and looked up in affright.

‘It’s only me, avourneen. *You’re* not frightened of me, sure? Or have I the evil eye to you too?’

There was genuine pain in her tone that brought Kate to herself.

‘How could you think that? I didn’t know you at all.’

‘Well, come on.’

‘I daren’t. He told me not to stir; an’ if the police came I was to pretend to be deaf.’

She lived in daily and nightly dread of the police.

‘It’s my belief he just talks about the peelers to fright you,’ Jenny remarked shrewdly. ‘If he was feared o’ them comin’ would he leave that for a present?’ and she pointed to a roll of tobacco and a keg of spirits. ‘But never mind, I won’t keep you long.’

‘But if he came home?’

‘No fear of that, and I can’t do without you.’

Thus urged, Kate crossed the wide marshy brickfield with Jenny, and standing on the tottering pyramid got down the coat. Down it came with a run, and Kate with it, the table having proved faithless. She fell heavily, cutting her forehead against the edge of the chair. When the blood was carefully washed away by the remorseful elf, it proved to be but a trifling wound; and as carefully as a

mother guiding her child, she escorted Kate across the lonely field, that, with its visionary population of dead robbers, murderers, and highwaymen, was the sensitive girl's *bête noir*. No entreaties could prevail on her to cross that field at night alone, and walking with Jenny past the graveyard of the poor, as a small enclosure was styled, she shut her eyes tight.

'You'll have to come back by yourself,' she ventured to whisper.

'Sure, and didn't I come by myself? Bless you, I don't mind them; not at all.'

She spoke truth. She had no fear of ghost or spirit, though she had a very devout belief in their existence; she thought she would rather enjoy an encounter with a supernatural being, it would be such fun, and she would have said so, only she knew it would terrify the trembling coward beside her. It was wonderful the tenderness with which she treated this girl.

'Law, I'd get the best of it,' she thought, glancing longingly at the desolate, disconnected headstones. 'I'd be a match for any of them.'

'Mind, you're not to tell; I'm going to have some fun,' was her parting injunction. Then she returned at full speed to the Shivers. Collecting everything belonging to her father, including his pipes and tobacco, she heaped them into the grate to make a bonfire, but a second thought caused her to rescue them, shake the dust out very penitently, and form them into a neat bundle. There was a mischievous sparkle in her eyes, while performing this act of filial duty, that reminded one forcibly of an ex-military clergyman exhorting his congregation to love their enemies. In another minute she was running full speed towards the Thieves' Quarter, the clothes under her arm.

It was nearly eleven when she returned, with a lighter load than that she had taken. Without waiting to give a poke to the dying fire, though the damp almost formed in drops that chill heavy night, she took her needle and scissors and set to work. By-and-by the damp clock pointed with its weak bent hands to midnight, and she stopped sewing. The solemn click-click seemed to bring vividly before her a night like this, when a pale drooping woman sat by a fireless grate, sewing her life into a struggle for decency. She remembered how when it wanted five minutes to twelve the patient hands had folded and put away the work, the gentle, weary voice had called the little black-eyed companion of her vigils closer to the mother's side, and reminded her that it was just the beginning of the Sabbath.

'But what's the use of my trying to be good?' exclaimed the elf impatiently. 'I can't be good; and mightn't I as well be bad outright, and not bother myself? Who's to care or know that I try not to work on a Sunday? And if they did know it's lazy they'd say I was. What's the good of my doing one thing when I can't do the others? Oh, don't be angry, mother avourneen; I'd like to be good for your sake, to be like you, but I can't; I don't know how, and I've nobody to tell me, and I wasn't born gentle and sweet, like Kitty. She's more like your own girl than me, but don't love her better,' and the hot tears welled up with the pitiful adjuration, so childish, yet so earnestly addressed to the dead mother ever present to the girl's vivid fancy. She did not take up the work again, but tidied the room—that was her principle of action; to leave everything at sixes and sevens during the week for her father's benefit, but everything must be put in order for her mother on Sundays—and finally ensconced herself on

an old settle. The upper loft was her usual sleeping-place, but she chose to remain below to-night to enjoy the sport.

Asleep, the Otter thought, when he came in at two; but the bright eyes watched him as he struck a light, and, after depositing something heavy almost at her feet, tried to blow up the fire. Some pieces of a broken pipe attracted his attention, and kicking it out of his way he stumbled over half a roll of the finest tobacco.

‘At her tricks again,’ he muttered sulkily.

‘You may say that,’ remarked Jenny, *sotto voce*.

He started as his eye fell on the crouched-up figure, and he glanced from his daughter to the bundle.

‘Here, get up, and see if you can get me some supper.’

‘What?’ said the girl sleepily.

‘What?’ and he mimicked her sleepy tone. ‘You’re sleepy, you are, dreadful; only yer eyes are as peart as if ye wor just after yer fit of divilry.’

‘I can’t help if my eyes aren’t as dull as yours,’ she replied, rubbing the offending organs with great contrition.

‘Get some supper.’

‘An’ where was I to get supper?’ said Jenny indignantly, now very broad awake indeed. ‘Suppers don’t grow anywhere that I know of; and if they did I’d let them stay for your picking.’

‘Do you mean to say there’s nothing to eat?’

‘It’s just what I mean, and what you’d mean if you wor as hungry as me.’

‘Why didn’t you get something somewhere?’ he asked furiously. ‘D’ye think I’ll keep you here doin’ nothin’?’

‘I tell you what,’ and the elfish eyes took a look he didn’t like; ‘it’s not a bit of good tryin’ it on; you wouldn’t

make me feared, not if ye strangled me; for I'd die with a consolation my poor mother hadn't—that you'd be hung for me. I'll steal for myself; but don't think I'm fool enough to do it for you.'

For answer he flung the bottle containing the candle at her; but, quick as thought, she bobbed her head.

'Maybe you don't want this piece of candle,' she remarked, as he proceeded to strike a match. 'I saved it for you particular, 'cos I know you don't like saying 'your prayers in the dark when ye've a good run of luck.'

He picked up the candle-end and stuck it in the bottle, which had escaped breakage. Then he rummaged about for food, but in vain; the cupboard was bare and most aggravatingly clean. A stone jar of spirits was all he could find; that had been protected by a lock unusually strong, which had defied Jenny's deft fingers.

'Go on up to your bed, you jade.'

'Not if I know,' said Jenny sturdily. 'They're goin' on like mad up there to-night, and I'm too sleepy to want to be kept awake.'

'None of yer humbuggin'; get out of my way.'

'It's no humbuggin',' and the eerie eyes fixed him with their solemn gravity. 'Just listen! You can go up there, if you like, but I'm not.'

A faint, low, rustling sound swept through the loft as she spoke.

'That's nothin',' she continued; 'it's the dancin' and the twitchin' I've objections to; and they're not content if I don't join in. Just give a look up, and ye'll see them capering and grinning; all the bones shaking in the skin. Don't you hear that rattle?'

There was a rattle up above, as of loose bones and

skulls shaken together. The candle, too, was nearly burnt out, and the exasperated Otter could find not one, though he always took especial care to keep a good supply.

'Where's the candles, you imp?' he demanded, shaking the girl, who again slept soundly.

'What?' said Jenny.

'The candles.'

'There's none.'

'You lie. There wor eight last night.'

'Well, I had three for my breakfast; an' two for my supper; and one I burnt; and that bit I saved ye, 'cos I know you hate to be in the dark.'

He turned away from the gibing look of derision, and sat down by the fire, now and then watching his daughter.

'She'd hang me if I gev her the chance,' he soliloquised, glancing from her to the bundle. 'But how am I to get it out of the way in the dark? Besides, she'll hear the chink.'

At last he ventured to remove the heavy parcel cautiously, and locked it up with the jar. When he turned, the bright eyes were wide open, and had a mischievous glitter. But she merely said,

'That tobacco's awful hard. I kicked agen it. I wonder was that what brought Brennan here at twelve? He was sitting there, just opposite where yer chair is; the rope wasn't round his neck, only the black mark, and his dead cap was pushed up off his face.'

Getting no reply to her speculation, she desisted, and whether the Otter was asleep or awake, only the solemn click-click fell with a dull muffled sound on the damp atmosphere.

The Otter awoke late; he could hardly believe his eyes

when he saw his daughter sitting at the door. The tiny lithe form was draped in a very old black silk of scant dimensions; a high black straw hat was perched on her head, which, together with the quaint fashion of the dress, gave her a queer, old-world look. A narrow scarlet ribbon round the slender throat bespoke the girl's innate coquetry, but her whole pride was in her slippers. Those slippers had very long toes, with huge rosettes and enormous buckles. Daintily as a duchess on her crimson cushions sat Jenny on her three-legged stool; her red lips curled with conscious pride; the morning sunlight bathing her sallow cheeks and irregular features in a light of beauty.

'What's up?' exclaimed the Otter; but Jenny, after a superbly disdainful glance, returned to the contemplation of her slippers.

Misgivings began to assail the Otter.

'I'm near froze with the cold. What have ye done with my coat? I thought it was out of your reach. Did you eat that too?'

'No, I didn't eat that,' said Jenny composedly. 'I put it on me. How does it fit?'

'An' you tuk my coat? It's a broken head you'll be getting, my fine lady.'

'I'd be only the more like you then. Everybody says yer cracked.'

'I'd advise everybody, and you too, to mind their own business.'

'Oh, we do, and mind yours too for you. Don't be ungrateful, or you might find my friends worse than the bobbies or the bailiffs. It isn't a Hobbs' lock 'ud keep them from—tobacco. I know them, and they understand me so well.'



'I've no doubt they do,' growled the Otter, amused, in spite of himself, at her audacity. 'What fit is on you to dress yourself out? It's not a bit of use; you're more like a witch than ever.'

'I know. I can't help it, sure, and neither can you,' and she fixed upon him a malignant look, that in broad daylight made him shudder.

'I daren't trust her,' he muttered, as she departed unopposed. 'She'd turn agen me in a twinklin', and there's no knowin' where to have her. She says she's dangerous, and, faith, I believe her.'

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## CHAPTER V.

### GOING TO CHURCH.

UNDER the giant beech trees in the gentl Latin the Sabbath shone with a peaceful splendour, that glorified into something like beauty the pinched faces of the two girls, the witch and the lady of the Latin, as her companions derisively called her. The same title was given her by Jenny, but not in mockery, not even in sport, but in sober earnestness.

'I was a'most feared you wouldn't come,' said Jenny Joice; and Kate, after glancing nervously up and down to see if none of her tormentors were in sight, began to forget her dread of the juvenile tyrants, who almost as much as the police rendered her life miserable, in admiration of Miss Joice.

‘But what sort of a dress is it?’ she asked, puzzled, almost afraid to touch.

‘Why, silk, to be sure,’ ejaculated Jenny, a little indignantly. ‘Is it that you don’t know silk when you see it?’

‘Yes,’ said Kate apologetically; ‘I see it’s silk, but it’s not quite like that young lady’s dress.’

‘No, not quite,’ said Jenny, reflectively scanning her costume; ‘but,’ she added, after a moment’s pause, ‘her’s was green and white, and this is black.’

‘Yes,’ said Kate again. She had not divined that the fabric was silk; it was not exactly what she had pictured to herself under the title of a silk dress; but she thought it very nice, and said so.

‘Yes, I think I look very nice,’ said Miss Joice, a good deal soothed; ‘and now I want a look at you.’

Kate had not procured any adornment; the only preparation she had been able to make was to wash her hands and face very clean, and to make some rough repairs in her ragged dress.

‘It’s sweet and pretty you look, my lady of the Latin,’ said Miss Joice; ‘but your hair will never do, mavourneen, so sit till I settle it.’

It was her pride and delight to comb and plait Kate’s hair at every opportunity, and she was provided with a broken comb. With wonderful care and not a little taste she piled the braids on the small head, while Kate related how her vagabond playmates had espied her clean face, and had followed her with gibes and jeers, and missiles of every description, till she had outrun them. They were one of the two terrors of her life, and despite Jenny’s advice and protection she could not face them bravely. She shrank,

quivering, from their cruel attacks, in a way that made Miss Joice at once enraged and pitiful.

'Never mind, my dear,' she said, having made the hair, soft and silky in spite of neglect, look glossy in the sunshine. 'They're an ugly lot and they know it, and they hate you 'cos you're just a lady.'

'I don't want to be, I'm sure, if that's——'

'Don't be a baby,' said Miss Joice. 'You can't help bein' a lady no more nor I can bein' a witch.'

As she spoke she took up with great tenderness and began to undo the parcel she had laid so carefully under the trees. Softly, lingeringly, she unpinned it, and brought to light a hat, a plain, common white straw hat, with not a bit of trimming save a blue ribbon tied in a bow at the back; but perfectly new, and a marvel of beauty in the eyes of the witch and the lady of the Latin. There was a strange contrast between its freshness and simplicity and Jenny's quaint, odd attire.

'Isn't it a darling?' sighed Miss Joice admiringly.

'Yes, isn't it? and quite new too.'

'You see, my dear, it's a red ribbon I'd a' got, only you're always talking about that blue hat at the fair, so I thought you'd like it better.'

'Me? it's not for me it is?'

'It's for yourself it is, and nobody else; so now make it look pretty, and put it on, avourneen.'

It was something worth while to see, that vagrant girl's incredulous wonder, that strange, ill-looking elf smiling out her satisfaction, till the spirit of contentment changed her being and transformed her countenance with a radiant beauty, totally independent of a plain face, a sallow complexion, heavy eyebrows and deep-set eyes, into a some-

thing glorious to look upon. Yes, it was worth a walk in the Latin that peaceful Sabbath morning, in the chequered autumn sunshine, falling through the spreading branches ; and so thought Robert Dalzell, as he watched the children from a distance.

‘It’s not for me, sure?’ said Kate, quite stunned with the munificence of the gift. ‘Oh, I can’t take it; your’s isn’t half as nice.’

‘Now, don’t bother; sure, I could’nt wear a white hat, and me near a black?’

‘But how could you think of me?’

‘An’ who else would I be thinkin’ of, alanna machree? Didn’t I know ye couldn’t go to church without a hat, and did I want ye to do what a lady wouldn’t do? There’s the bells.’

The sound drew them irresistibly on. The two little Pariahs, hitherto debarred from every chance of contact with the respectable portion of mankind, found themselves impelled to join the throng, in spite of a conviction, unshapen but felt, that they had no place among those neatly-dressed people, who with prayer-books in their hands and ceremonies in their hearts looked askance at the two queer figures, hurrying past with a queer mixture of boldness and timidity.

The bells had almost done ringing, and Jenny resolved to give up looking for the church her mother had taken her to years ago, and to enter the next she came to. It was a large, handsome proclamation of a rich man’s piety, and not seeing any entrance but the one, they followed a group of ladies into the porch. The ladies went in, and the little outcasts went in too, heedless of the enquiring eyes turned upon them. The sexton was not in the way,

and they slipped into one of the first seats they came to, which was cushioned and carpeted.

Not a word did they exchange. No two duchesses could have been more perfectly decorous than this outlandish pair from the Thieves' Quarter, who were in fact strangely impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. To sit in a place of worship, amongst decently-clad, decently-behaved people, as if of them, was a very novel situation, and produced novel feelings in minds uncultivated yet so keenly alive to impressions, hungering after something better and nobler than their poor stunted lives could afford, hungering and thirsting after goodness though they knew it not, groping in utter darkness for a light that had never dawned upon them.

Tier upon tier of pews, row upon row of grave, silent people, line upon line of expectant faces, all waiting, all watching. So many good people! And to be amongst them, doing as they did, waiting and watching as did those people, who came Sunday after Sunday to God's House, who never stole, or lied, or swore, who were all good, all respectable! No wonder those children's eager eyes dilated, no wonder the excited pulses throbbed, no wonder the earnest look scanned wonderingly, almost fearfully, the mighty dome with its fretted roof, its gilded cornices, its massive pillars, its crowded occupants.

Hush! Stealing on their ears, rising, rolling, spreading, peeling through the vaulted aisles, sinking, wailing, dying in the vast cathedral, overpowering their senses with its wondrous spell, comes a mighty rushing sound. Louder and louder yet, till the untutored hearts swell and heave, till they feel that another note must cause them to break in hysterical agony; then softer and softer grow the

strains; fainter, slower, are the cadences; once again the wild sweet notes thrill the listening ears, then die away as a white-robed minister bows his head in homage to a Supreme Invisible.

Entranced they drink in the tidings proclaimed by a solemn, sonorous voice; words spoken rather than read, words of comfort, beautiful words, that fall on the ear of each little Arab like the remembrance of some forgotten dream. Then the organ peals forth a joyful strain, hundreds of voices join the music, and there echoes in the stupendous building a jubilant sound that an archangel might listen to, that goes up surely to a greater than an archangel. Then all the congregation kneel reverently, all, from the highest to those little waifs who kneel in imitation of the other people, while the white-haired minister makes intercession to some great Unknown for them—for them, surely, for does he not pray for miserable sinners?—while all around join in the entreaty, and help to implore mercy for those two outcasts.

Oh! it was beautiful, entrancing.

During the service a gentleman entered the pew, but he did not disturb the first occupants. Perhaps he had a fancy for curiosities; perhaps he thought there was room enough for all. He ensconced himself in his corner, and the children enjoyed their treat without annoyance from the horrified beadle, who at a sign from the gentleman left them unmolested.

It was over very soon the children thought; though my Lord Woodenhead yawned a great many times up in the front pew, and wondered what Mr. Elia could find to say so long about the old, old story. Then the well-dressed

congregation trooped out with a push, and a rush, and a crush, very unseemly to any but church-goers.

‘What hev you been up to?’ demanded the beadle, laying his heavy hand on Kate’s shoulder. She looked up with a start and a gasp, and a white face of conscious guilt.

Miss Joice came to the rescue.

‘It’s to church we’ve been, as ye’d know if you wor attendin’ to your business.’

‘It’s to your business I’ll attend purty soon. Nice spectacles ye are to go to church, and in the centre aisle too.’

‘If we got seats we needn’t thank you for them.’

‘Faith, ye may say that, you rapscallion. How many pockets have ye picked since eleven?’

‘Sure, we don’t want to intrude on your pickin’s,’ said Miss Joice, with much politeness.

People began to pause and gather round, and the beadle grew exasperated.

‘Hillo, Bill, run for a peeler.’


A faint cry burst from Kate, as she stretched out her hands to Jenny. Miss Joice responded by clasping the weak little hands in hers, as she faced the beadle.

‘Leave go that girl. I tell you, you’d better.’

‘I will, Miss,’ said the beadle, with cutting irony, ‘as soon as the policeman comes.’

‘She’s done nothin’, only come to church. Leave go, or she’ll die. Oh! do take me instead. I done nothin’, but I don’t care a pin. Oh! you are a great big coward; you take her ’cos she’s afeard, and you don’t dare touch me ’cos I’m able for ye.’

A hearty guffaw burst from the worthy, as he looked



down at the diminutive form that asserted itself as being able for a beadle six foot two in his stockings, to say nothing of his boots.

'I don't think you need detain those children,' said a gentleman passing. 'They sat in my pew during service, and behaved very well.'

'Bless you, sir, they're no good. Look at 'em.'

'That is possible; but I suppose it would be rather hard to punish these untaught, ill-clad, pinched starvelings for not being what neither you nor I, well-fed, well-clothed, well-taught, can become. At any rate, I would not, if I were you, punish them for trying to be a little less wicked once in a way.'

'Does yer honour know where they come from? The Thieves' Latin, and they're thieves, every one, sure enough. Why, that's a new hat, and that's stolen, you can see.'

'No, it's not,' interrupted Miss Joice. 'I bought it.'

'Don't believe her, sir. If she did, she stole what paid for it.'

'Possibly; but I can bear witness that these girls have not stolen since ten this morning, and I believe your jurisdiction is confined to church hours.'

'All right, sir; if it's your fancy, they may go. It's not for the likes of me to know better than you,' and he released his hold, adding, *sotto voce*, 'Plase the pigs they'll give you a taste of their honesty.'

Freed from that stern grip, from the scrutiny of all those gaping eyes, Kate hurried on, every nerve tingling with dread and shame and horror of that curious, inquisitive, merciless throng, who slew her with cold, keen, contemptuous, prying glances, that sought to read into her miserable, degraded life, and leave her no poor shelter of



privacy. Proudly defiant and passionate, Jenny walked beside her, while Robert Dalzell followed more slowly, all three wondering whether there was any encouragement to come again.

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## CHAPTER VI.

BALFE'S PUZZLE. GOING TO SEEK HER FORTUNE.

'KATE!' said the elf suddenly, 'how I ought to hate that man.'

'He didn't hurt me,' Kate said bravely. Coward as she was she seldom cried over a danger past.

'I didn't mean that wretch. I'll pay him off some day, depend upon it. But I meant *him*,' and she jerked her hand towards the Shivers.

'Your father, Jenny?'

'Don't call him that,' and the girl's black eyes gleamed like stars. 'I tell you, again and again, he's no father to me. I hate him, agra, and good reason I have for that same. Who is it I may thank that I can't go inside a church door, no matter how my heart may crave to kneel where my mother knelt? Who is it that has brought me up a thief, a scarecrow, to be flouted by all good people? My father. Oh, Kitty, if I was dead!'

'Who says you're a thief or a scarecrow?' demanded Kate, roused to indignation by the intense misery of the girl's tones. 'You're better than all them you call so good.'

'What's the good of talking?' said Jenny Joice



mournfully. 'I know what I know ; and I see what I see ; and it's to-day I saw more than I ever saw in my life before. Oh, my dear, if you knew how miserable I felt when I sat in that grand church and looked at all those respectable people, not one ridiculous, only me, you'd wonder I didn't run out. I would have—only I was ashamed.'

'You worn't ridiculous. I thought we were very nice.'

'You were. Nothing would make you look bad. That was the only thing that comforted me ; you looked such a lady, dear.'

Words that seemed so cruel in their ironical bitterness coming from irate neighbours, sounded pleasant and amusing when spoken by Jenny ; and Kate laughed quietly, without debating what she had come to look upon as a standing joke.

'I can't stand it any longer,' said Jenny, suddenly coming to a dead stop and facing round ; 'and what's more, I wont.'

'What can you do ?' was the timid query.


'I've done my best to plague him, and I plague myself a great deal more than him. I can't stand it no longer ; and I can't plague him any more without downright hanging work.'

'Jenny, Jenny, what do you mean ?'

Heedless of her companion's white, scared face, she walked on a few steps, stopped again, and spoke slowly.

'I'll run away.'

Kate heaved a sigh of relief. Then the fatally vivid imagination that was her portion portrayed before her, in all its blackness, what her life would be without Jenny.



Jenny, who stood between her and the indignation of slatternly, drunken women, who demanded loudly why Balfe's daughter shouldn't drink rum and whisky if it pleased them to give it to her; Jenny, who stood between her and the petty but all-terrible persecutions of the boys and girls of her own age, whose ways were not her ways and never could be, she felt, though she could assign no reason for it, since she had never seen any other; Jenny, who neither scrupled nor feared to bully Balfe, the king of them all, when it was necessary. In the first abandonment of her terror she clung to the lithe little creature, whose black eyes had a strange far-away look just now, crying piteously,

'Don't leave me by myself, Jenny.'

'Sure it's not that I was ever thinkin' of,' Jenny said in surprise. 'You must come.'

'Me?'

'Yes; how could I go without you?'

Kate shook her head slowly, and untwined her arms. Hiding, as well as she could, the despair that sickened her, she commenced her woman's life of suffering and self-abnegation; commenced it with an unconsciousness that made it sublime.

'No, I daren't go; but you must.'

'Not without you.'

'I couldn't—sure, I daren't.'

'But think, alanna machree, we could be away from all them people that we hate; and we could be honest, avourneen, like my mother.'

It was strangely thrilling, that voice, now, attuned to such true harmony by the one beautiful thought of her life.

'You should have seen how the minister shook hands with her that day, that one day in her life when *he* let her go to church. Yes, he shook hands with her, she was so respectable, my mother, so honest ; for her sake I want to be honest too. And there—well, we might have the minister to shake hands with us, too, if we got away from here ; a minister just like that minister. Kate, you must come.'

It was all too attractive a picture ; but still the girl shook her head.

'Then I won't go.'

'Oh, you must. Yes, dear, you must be respectable. It'll make me so happy, even if I'm never respectable myself.'

'You ? It's nothin' else you'll be, no matter where you are. It's yerself is more like my mother's child than me.'

'Where have you been ? ' queried Balfe.

The girl trembled in every limb, but there was a fatal mesmeric power for her in those relentless eyes that compelled the truth.

'To church.'

Had she said to heaven the robber could not have looked more amazed. Then a fear of a baffled plan lowered over his stern visage, and shot forth in the fierce, lurid light of his eyes. Rising, he grasped her with no brutal grasp, but with a stern force that exemplified startlingly the way in which he held her spirit.

'To church ? You to church ? You, whom I have dedicated to hell and darkness and vengeance ; do you dare to go to a church ? '

There was something very terrible in the livid wrath of

this man, something before which a stronger spirit might have quailed.

‘You at church, listening to preaching and good words? Is it baffle me that way, you would? I tell you you can’t do it. Do you think I’ll be put aside that way? What did you learn? Tell me that I may root it out.’

She made no answer, and unconsciously he tightened his grasp.

‘What was the text? You’ve a glib memory enough, as I know.’

Is there anything too hard for the Lord?

‘Honour thy father and mother.’

His hold relaxed; looking down at the white face a new fear struck him. Holding her tightly as he did, he felt that she was slipping out of his grasp in a way he had never bargained for. The new sensation was strangely tempered with a pity that grew greater as the girl, gaining courage from the stupor it produced, ventured to speak.

‘Father, I want to be good, only won’t you help me?’

‘Help you? Me? Are you mad, that you come to me to help you to be good? To me, that have sworn by every oath that is binding to damn you to the lowest pit?’

Some great spell was on the girl, or she could never have spoken as she did.

‘But why, father? I want to be good, and I can’t, I can’t.’

‘Of course you can’t. Do you think it’s for the like of you to be good? Poor, and the child of a thief! I tell you heaven is like the first-class carriages; you can’t pay for ’em, and they’re not for you. Let me hear no more of this,’ he added in a calmer tone. ‘It’s your first and last going to church,’

She did not answer for a moment.

'The minister said I might get good, even if I had no one to teach me.'

The answer did not please him, but he could not in any reason take exception to it. She lit up the fire that had gone out, and still the great spell was on her, and still he remained almost stupefied with that new sensation of her slipping out of his grasp, even while he held her fast.

It became clearer to him now—the strange natural sweetness that had long puzzled him, that had resisted all his efforts to destroy. He no longer wondered so much that she performed loving little offices despite his harsh manner. But still he wondered a little, and his curiosity at last found vent.

'What made you wish to go to church, of all places?'

The water bubbling on the hearth, the unusually gentle tones of his voice, all conspired to give her courage, and she went closer to the moody man.

'I thought if I learnt to be good, sure, you'd like me a little, father?'

'What? What do I do to you?'

'Nothing,' she said, shrinking a little at the sudden fierceness; 'but I don't think you like me.'

He laughed a sardonic, bitter laugh.

'And why shouldn't I like you?'

'Maybe it's because I'm so unhandy. If I was useful would you like me?'

He did not answer, except to stare at her as she returned to her watch by the fire. Suddenly he spoke.

'Question for question is fair, I suppose. Do you like me?'

'Yes, father.'

She said it with a grave simplicity that staggered him, for it was the truth. She was craving for the sympathy she had never known, and would have given all the little enjoyment she had ever known in her poor life to hear him call her his own little girl, as even the Otter had once termed Jenny.

Then he got angry with himself and with her. What had he ever done that she should reproach him for not liking her? She must bother him with no more of those notions that he could not account for her possessing. Where had she got them? Who had taught her? He puzzled himself over the question, as many a wiser man has done before and since, and with the same result.

'You don't feel sorry to go?' Kate queried, as a few nights after the two friends braved the wintry wind. The plan had ripened into action, and Jenny was going. Full of great plans and noble emprise, grand resolves and high hopes, she was going, like some heroine of old, out in the world to seek her fortune.

'Sorry to leave you, Kate. It's almost wishin' I am that I wasn't going.'

'You mustn't wish that, sure. But don't you feel just a little sorry——'

'For him? No, no, no, a thousand times, no. Ah! it's not so much for anything he's ever done to me that I hate him so bitter, though, sure, I have cause enough for that, too. But that's not it—he killed my mother. Why should he be regretted? Oh! if it wor that first true love, that man that she blessed dying, then you might ask me if I was sorry for him; aye, if he treated me like a dog. I'm goin' to look for him.'

'To look for him?' repeated Kate admiringly.

'It's find him I will afore I rest.'

'And then?'

'Then? I'll serve him like a slave, I'll watch between him and harm; it's give my life I would for him—the man who loved my mother.'

There was an indescribably exquisite pathos in her sharp, shrill voice as she spoke the last words. Lingering on them like a loving echo, loth to lose the melodious sounds, she repeated slowly, ecstatically—

'The man who loved my mother.'

'He loved her very much?'

'You may say that. When every friend turned the cold shoulder to the woman that lived in the Thieves' Latin, he brightened her life to the last. It was a comfort to her in all her troubles, somehow, and she had a great many. It must be very beautiful to be loved like that, mustn't it?' and the elf's eyes had a strange dreary, questioning look very foreign to them, for Miss Joice was not in general given to abstract speculations.

'Yes,' said Kate thoughtfully. This sentence of Jenny's seemed to give shape to the thoughts that had haunted her so long.

'But won't it be nice when you're comin' to me, acushla?' Jenny added, reverting to the practical.

'I don't care to talk of that,' and again came the mournful shake of the head. 'Daddy says it's not for the like of me to be honest, and I'm only a miserable coward, you see. But if I should never get away from here, it's glad in my heart I am that you're going to be good and respectable.'

'Like my mother,' whispered Jenny softly. 'I never saw her cry like the day *he* made me run away with some



gingerbread from a stall, and it's fine fun it was to me to be so smart; but I never done it again while I had her. When I lost her—ah! it's bad, bad I got. But it wasn't all me,' she added rebelliously, 'I couldn't help it.'

'An' I can't,' burst from Kate, almost involuntarily, as she interlaced her fingers and cowered in the degradation that day by day was thrusting itself upon her growing spirit, that day by day took a more decided and a more terrible shape, that day by day pressed her closer, till the time should come that there should be no escape.

'To be sure you can't; that is you couldn't if you weren't such a born lady. But keep a good heart, acushla machree, darling of my heart, for it's myself 'll come and take ye if ye can't run away.'

'Ye must go,' Kate whispered, wondering what she should do when Jenny was gone.

'How they'll be on to you when they miss me.'

'I'll never tell.'

'Sure, you needn't tell me that; but ye're such a little frightened bit of a thing. Ah! I haven't the heart to leave you.'

'Oh, ye wouldn't be after turnin' back now,' said Kate vehemently. 'But Jenny—supposin' ye never come back—couldn't ye forgive him afore ye go? Just one good word an' I'll give it to him—your father.'

'I couldn't, I couldn't, Kate. It would kill me to speak the words.'

Terribly earnest, passionately earnest, were the lurid eyes, the curves of the quivering mouth, the dilating nostrils.

'Then, good-bye, dear; you mustn't stay.'

Poor little coward. Ah! it is such cowards who do

things that make brave men shrink. Not a sob betrayed that she was losing the one whose ever-ready arm stood alone between her and the brutality of the people amongst whom she lived, whose biting tongue hurled from her all the coarseness flung at the 'lady,' and held her scatheless. And Jenny, fiery, passionate, dauntless Jenny, with all the world before her; only for a moment did she suffer herself to cling to the fragile form with a nameless dread jarring the music of her burden.

'I'll come for you.' The good-byes were as bravely spoken as though each was a princess surrounded by guardians and subjects, instead of a little waif with no attendant train save the wintry night-wind, no crowd of witnesses save the solemn stars that looked down in their illimitable grandeur and solemnity on that leave-taking.


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## CHAPTER VII.

### IS SHE GAME ?

'SLIPPING through my fingers, sure as a gun. Balfe, this'll never do to be fooled afther eleven years by a bit of a girl that ye could break in two.'

The master of the first round tower was eating his breakfast as he grumbled these words to himself. Plash, plash, went the rain over the brickfield, plash, plash, in the pools, thud, thud, on the heavy, clayey soil. 'It must be dreadfully damp over at the Shivers,' Kate thought, 'and



very lonely,' she added to herself, with some pity for the Otter.

It seemed only an additional splash when the door was pushed open without ceremony, and the Otter stood upon the threshold, wet and limp, and with peculiar lines marked on his usually immobile, smooth, shiny face, lines that did not seem to belong to that oily face, lines into which the rain had somehow got, and trickled down while he spoke.

'Is my girl here?'

'No,' said Balfe gruffly. 'What'd your girl be doing here this hour?'

'It's that same I want to find out.'

'Is it mornin' visitors we're goin' to have, that you stand starin' there like a fool?' demanded Balfe impatiently.

'Out with whatever ye've got to say.'

'Your girl could tell if she liked.'

'What could she tell?'

'Where's my Jenny?'

She had been trained to lie.

'I don't know.'

'You lie, ye do.'

'An' what is it to you, ye spalpeen of a fish, if she does?' growled Balfe, irritated at the other's tone.

'Don't ye turn agen me,' interposed the Otter almost piteously. 'We've bin partners many's the day, and would ye turn agen me now? Look here,' and he turned to Kate, pulling a handful of copper and silver out of his waistcoat pocket. 'It's just a run of luck I've got, and I'll double that if you'll tell me where's my girl.'

'I dunno,' the girl said stoutly.

He dashed down the money with a sort of despair, and

turned to the door. Balfe was struck by the earnestness of his gesture, and called after him, 'Where to ?'

'To the river,' said the lesser robber, glancing round with a white terror glazing his oily face. 'She told me she'd do it. Poor Jenny, poor Susie's child.'

Quivering with the keenest sympathy, Kate stood watching the open door, the plashing pools. No ! she could not let him go with that look on his face, that fear in his heart, and rushing out of the house she called after him till he turned.

'Jenny's not in the river.'

'How do you know ?'

'She told me so.'

The man gave a gasp of relief.

'Where is she ?'

'I dunno.'

'You do !'

'Well, I won't tell then.'

'No ? We'll see.'

Hasty and excited still, the Otter re-entered the cabin.

'It's partners we wor this many a day, ay, sure, this many a year for the matther of that, and will ye turn agen me for a girl ?'

'Don't give me any of your sentiment if you want me to help you,' interposed Balfe, in a tone of intense disgust. 'Perhaps it's many a day, and perhaps it isn't, but if it were as many years as it is days there'd be no hold on me ; for the first sneakin' turn you done me I'd pitch ye over. I let other people look out for themselves.'

'Ay, to be sure, that's fair and reasonable, it is ; but your bark is worse than your bite.'

'What do you want ?'

‘Now, look here, chief——’

‘None o’ your blarney,’ interrupted the bigger robber, rising with sudden fierceness; ‘none o’ your chiefin’ here. Do you think I want you to tell me I’m the best of you?’

‘It’s a spirit you’ve got, it is,’ persisted the slimy man, as if unable to help himself. ‘Well now, partner, your girl says she knows where my youngster is, and I can’t make her tell; can you?’

Could he? Of course he could. Surely he could bend a stronger will than that possessed by this poor little craven, who shrank from his very look.

‘Where is the girl?’

Unconsciously he took a tone of supreme command, that, spite of his coarse garb and villainous hair, had nothing of the grotesque in it, and elicited admiring sighs from the Otter. He knew the strange mesmeric power his voice and glance had over that weak, frail girl, and he wondered she did not respond to it. But though she quailed and quivered she did not speak.

‘Why don’t you speak?’ he demanded, bending closer to her the lurid eyes that seemed to her excited fancy to emit living sparks. She continued to gaze, as if fascinated by the magnetism of his voice and touch; but her lips formed no word. But, what! should she not only slip through his fingers, from his tight grasp, but defy him in the meanwhile? He raised his right hand, while with the other he tightened his vice-like grip. A shriek burst from her pale lips, a piteous entreaty.

‘Oh, don’t beat me, father!’

‘Will you tell?’

A deadly white overspread her face; her lips shaped the word ‘No.’

A blow—a heavy, cruel, crushing blow, from a hand that seldom missed its aim, a hand that left its mark where it fell—and the fair white temple was bruised and broken, and the tangled hair grew clammy in the blood that oozed forth.

There was a stillness like death in the first-floor of that old round tower. Plash, plash, went the pools, and thud, thud, went the rain-drops on the clayey brickfield, and it seemed as if that ceaseless plashing was but the blood trickling down, that dull thud the echo of that cruel blow. Balfe still held the girl firmly; the Otter still stood with a curious expression on his fish-like countenance; such as a Premier's private secretary might wear when he found his master tripping. But the robber's voice involuntarily, unconsciously, took a lower tone as he bent yet again to speak. The Otter held his breath to catch the answer, while the oily eyes opened wide to show their puzzled wonder.

‘Will you tell now?’

Pale, oh, very pale and very fair, grew that young face, soiled and spattered with blacks and mud, and smeared with the rain-drops and the blood that trickled down. Pale and fair, in all its dirt and squalor, and pinched misery, and hungry outlines, and shrinking terror. But no sign of yielding came. A strange sad look around the delicate colourless lips came with the unnatural pallor; deepened as it deepened, spread as it spread to the eyes and the brow. White, white, very white, with a hunted look in the sad eyes, but firm, strangely firm.

‘Will you tell?’

He spoke louder now, and once more his stern, strong hand was raised. The peculiar look round her mouth

deepened. His eyes burned down with a fierce, questioning, cruel look, as her lips parted.

'Sure, ye can kill me, but I'll never tell on Jenny.'

He put her down, not roughly nor gently, but quietly, with something like a gasp, it might be relief or it might be disappointment, with a look that was a strange mixture of joy and pity. Loosed from his hold she staggered feebly. For a second he stood looking down at the bloody bruise, and the matted hair, and the moveless figure: but if he was waiting for a sob or a sign of suffering, none came, and he turned suddenly upon the Otter. There was a look in his eyes the owner of the Shivers did not like, and he edged towards the door.

'Yes, that way, quick.' Balfe said, and following him out into the yellow mud, out into the plashing rain that beat unheeded on his head, he grasped the Otter as he had just grasped Kate. The man paled.

'What is it now?' he said in a tone meant to be facetious, but that, diluted with the water and the grip, only sounded weak and shaky. 'Arrah! but it's yerself is the quare boy that nobody knows where to have at all, at all.'

'Only this,' and the greater villain scowled and bent his head close to that of the lesser one. 'Only this—don't come atween that girl and me agen. That's the first blow she got from me, and it's through you, ye spalpeen; you made me give it to make an informer of her. Don't do it again, mind that, or by the powers it's not a fish ye'll be, but food for the fishes.'

'Through me? I done nothin' to her.'

'Oh, no.'

'Nor I didn't tell you to strike her.'

'No, you dog, 'cos you knew if ye did I wouldn't do it;

ye only stood by and let me do it. It's your work as much as if you done it, and more. Don't think I want to shift the blame from my shoulder; it's on me to the full, but it's on you too, you cowardly spalpeen.'

'It's not blamin' me ye ought to be,' the Otter said with some show of indignation. 'Was I goin' to hould yer hand when you said you could make her do as you liked?'

'I said that, an' I couldn't,' said the tramp, with a strange mixture of pleasure and anger. His hold loosened, his face was doubtful, his voice irresolute. The Otter no longer existed for him; he was looking into space, he was questioning Fate.

'Why didn't she tell? Why didn't she scream and cry when I struck her? She's timid, and she's game. Her heart stood in her eyes, but she made no sign. Why didn't she show herself the coward I always thought her? Am I to end by liking her? That'll be bad, bad.'

Bad? It was all bad. Robber as he was he sickened at the sight of that hideous wound, at the sight of the girl trying helplessly to wipe away the blood. He took a jug of clear rain-water, and seeing nothing better he tore the girl's apron into strips and cleansed the forehead. After the first quiver he found himself marvelling at the perfect calm quiet with which she sat, neither sobbing, nor speaking, nor moving. The bruise was bad, but the blood was from an abrasion of the skin by an iron ring he wore.

'Does it hurt much?' he asked half curiously, perhaps altogether remorsefully. She shook her head feebly, and tried to speak, but failed. Then her courage gave way, the tears rolled down, and he drew back.

'Is she game, or is she the coward I always took her to



be? Maybe I'm makin' a fool of myself other than the way I think.'

In the stern, pitiless voice she knew so well he spoke to the enfeebled girl.

'Will you tell?'

The deathly pallor grew more livid, but clearer, sterner, more decided, came that look of firmness, as faint and faltering came the words, 'I'll never tell on Jenny.'

'You're a good girl, a brave girl,' he said suddenly; then he turned away impatiently.

All through the day the rain plashed in the pools and huddled the earth, and Kate sat motionless on the settle in a dreamy kind of stupor, and the tramp sat by the fire, turning now and again at some heavier plash and thud to look with a start at the forehead so lately bloody, to ask himself if it was his hand that had dealt that woful bruise that seemed to swell and glare into hideous livid colours as the hours went by.

All through the night the rain went plash and thud, and the man went restlessly to and fro from the fire to the settle, where he had placed a pillow (not dainty, indeed, but soft), to the fire, and from the fire back to the settle. He knew when Kate was awake, for it was only then she was still; in her sleep she moaned unceasingly, and tossed restlessly on the hard couch that was nevertheless better than her damp bed in the loft.

'It was a bad blow,' he repeated to himself, over and over. 'It's bad, all bad; she's slipping through my fingers; and the worst of it is I'm beginnin' to be afeard I'll be sorry for her. But why?'

Then he paced the earthen floor impatiently, yet softly.

'Why? why? why?—it's all why? and no one to answer.'

Why didn't she grow up a flaunting jade, that would dare me, and let me hate her, as I should? Failin' that, why isn't she the sneakin' coward that I could despise? But what's the good of talkin'? I'm beginnin' to think it's no why? at all. I dunno why I'll be sorry; I only know I am.'

Yes, pacing up and down that earthen floor, pausing, now by the settle, now by the fire, now looking at the pale face where that mark stood out in its array of livid purple, now into the flickering, hissing fire, the sorrow deepened and strengthened, and he couldn't tell why.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### MISS INGRAM MAKES A PROMISE.


'Now, Beatrice, I really do trust, if only for the sake of the family, that you will remember that it is Mr. Blennerhasset who is expected.'

'I should like to know how it would be possible for me to forget it, even for one blessed minute,' retorted Beatrice, not at all penitently. 'What is the need of telling one to remember what is dinned into one's ears every hour in the day, by every member of the establishment. It's my firm belief that Dido will learn to say Mr. Blennerhasset in a short time; and as for Polly—she declares us "blessed asses" without ceasing. She's practising, I suppose.'

‘That’s another of your tricks,’ said Mrs. Chirrup severely.

‘Now, godmother, when I wanted to please you by teaching Polly to welcome Mr. Blennerhasset, *was* it my fault if she *would* say “blessed asses”?’

It was a very charming face, that which was upturned just now in very provoking seriousness. A fair, oval, rose-tinted face, with very irregular yet exceedingly small and delicate features, and limpid grey eyes; a face shaded by tresses of waving gold, not heavy and massy, but sparkling and spiral, and rambling and unmanageable, like the girl who owned them; tresses that would not be done in any of the fashionable styles, that would not be drawn primly over the round white forehead, or be forced to define too clearly the profile whose chief characteristic was a dainty *nez retroussé*; but that asserted their independence by straggling in finest flaky silkiness just where no properly-regulated hair should be found straying, now dropping an end on one sloping shoulder, now tumbling over the finely-arched eyebrows, now pushed back and imprisoned by a comb with which it indulged in a perpetual warfare, in which, to say the truth, the hair had the best of it. The comb just now was victorious, only one wilful lock having escaped from the large knot in which the flossy, rippling golden mass was gathered; and the small head, poised so gracefully on the slenderest of ivory pillars, required no more elaborate adornment. The lady to whom she justified herself so unsatisfactorily was anything but a shrewish duenna, although, just for the moment, the young lady’s shocking propensities had transformed her into a charming edition of a scold. She was the tiniest of tiny ladies, with a soft, brilliant complexion that might have belonged to a



beauty of twenty-five, and the loveliest silver-grey hair in the world, wavy and luxuriant still, under the smallest of lace caps. Such a dainty little figure, too, as was displayed in that rich but not at all cumbersome robe of soft, thick silver-grey, that matched her hair so well; such soft, white, almost unseamed hands, as were shaded by the undersleeves of rich lace. Brilliant, restless eyes, deep-set under the still dark brows and black lashes, gave a character of piquancy to the face, that defied you to tell whether it was that of a young woman whose locks had prematurely turned grey, or of an Irish Ninon de L'Enclos, who scorned to mar the beauty of her crown of age by dye or deceit. Even the dress did not enlighten you; it was decorous enough for a lady of sixty, it was rich and fanciful enough for a woman of twenty, who might be supposed, from the fact of her hair being turned, to have suffered some amount of ill-health or misfortune. Mrs. Chirrup was a puzzle to many, but to no one more than herself. She looked down very gravely at the girl sitting at her feet, and then she said, in clear bell-like tones that left you more puzzled than ever,

‘Beatrice, I’m really disappointed in you. I begged you to be serious, and you won’t.’

The blithe white fingers went all the more rapidly over the tatting to conceal the effort Mrs. Chirrup made to be stern.

‘Serious! Could I be more so? You are really very unreasonable.’

‘I don’t know about that; I know I am very dissatisfied.’

‘At what, dear?’

‘You don’t seem to me to realise who Mr. Blennerhasset

really is, or the magnitude of the importance of the opinion he may form of the heiress of Ingram ; an opinion that may be rendered hopelessly unfavourable, not by absolute wickedness on your part, but by your giddiness and frivolity.'

'Good gracious, godmother ! now you think me more stupid than I really am. I have, I beg to assure you, a thorough conception of who and what Mr. Blennerhasset is. He's the member for Slopperton, the head of the Blennerhassets of Kerry, the most eminent lawyer in Dublin, the owner of Blennerhasset Moor, of a mansion in Merrion Square, of another in Grosvenor Square, and a rental of three thousand a year.'

'Really, Flossy !' and Mrs. Chirrup put down her tatting, and tried to look very angry at this uncalled-for volubility.

'Now, don't look angry, there's a darling. I was only proving to you that appearances were "agen me," and that I really knew by heart the lesson that has been drilled into my poor brain by every person I see from morning till night. I can tell you more about Mr. Blennerhasset, if you like.'

'If you would only promise that you would try and alter a little while he is here, I should feel a little easier in my mind. Now promise, there's a good girl.'

'Alter ? Do I really want altering ?' demanded Flossy, opening her eyes with an innocent surprise that Mrs. Chirrup found very irritating, since it rendered it well-nigh impossible for her to maintain her dignity in the lecture she had long determined to administer to the provoking offender.

'I should rather think you do,' she rejoined pettishly ; 'and you know it as well as I do.'

'How could I know it, godmother ? Nobody ever told me so before.'

'I don't believe anybody ever tells you anything sensible.'

'Well now, darling, do you begin. I love variety, you know.'

Mrs. Chirrup again put down her tatting.

'You're a shocking little flirt.'

'A flirt, godmother! What's that?

The little lady rose impatiently.

'I shall talk no more to you, you provoking girl.'

'Now, godmother, don't try to look angry; it's not a bit of use. And please come and tell me what flirting is. How am I to avoid it, unless you give me some idea of it?'

'Now, Flossy, what *is* Mr. Blennerhasset to think of you?' and Mrs. Chirrup sought, by an influx of ill-humour, to free herself from the twining arms. 'Why don't you try just for once to be serious and sensible?'

'As to being serious, I assure you over and over that I am, dismally, dreadfully so. How could I be otherwise, when I am freighted, loaded down to the ground, with that man, his cleverness, his position? Serious! I should rather think so; if this Blennerhassetting process goes on much longer, you will have the satisfaction of seeing me subside into a chronic tract distributor. But as to being sensible—good gracious!—you've no idea how hard I try. I do, really, and it isn't a bit of use; the more I try the harder it gets. It doesn't come by nature.'

'Have you no conception of the dignity of your position? Do you never reflect that, whatever it might be for other young ladies, it is highly unbecoming for the heiress of Ingram to——'

'To be natural?'

‘To flirt. Are you going to tell me that comes natural?’

‘I’m afraid it does, since you say I do it,’ was the penitent rejoinder.

‘Then you must try and change it, my love. It might do for others, but it cannot for you. You understand, my child?’

‘But I don’t want to be a bit different,’ said the wilful girl. ‘I just want to do as I like, the same as other girls; and if my position won’t help me to do that, it’s not worth a pin, only all the bother it is.’

With a gay, ringing laugh she ran away, out on the lawn, leaving Mrs. Chirrup to try and get up the amount of wrath the sacrilege demanded.

‘Provoking little monkey,’ she said, as she settled herself in her low chair and resumed her tatting, all the while watching the figure among the flowers.

And what was she like, this girl whom Mrs. Chirrup scolded and watched and tried hard to be angry with?

She came upon you with a flattering, bewildering radiance, that defied you to tell, whether her nose was Grecian or snub, whether her eyes were blue or black, whether her mobile mouth was fully shaped or thin. All you knew was that you looked upon a piquant, bewitching, fascinating face; that the eyes you could not tell the colour of were brimful of a sparkling mischief, that nestled in the dimple on her pointed chin and lurked in the corners of her restless mouth. A dancing sunbeam, a flitting, ever-changing, but always radiant thing. That was about the most definite idea any of her acquaintances were able to form about her; and the longer they knew her the farther they were from getting at anything more tangible; the more completely was she enabled, consciously or unconsciously,

to blind them by her versatile wit, her numberless fascinations and wiles, her endless chameleon transformations, and defy them to discover whether they had any right to think her pretty, according to orthodox rules, or whether they sinned against the laws of good taste in surrendering to this bewildering creature. Of course, a good many conscientious people tried hard to gain a correct idea of her features, but they might as well have left it alone.

If it was hard to read correctly the mere countenance, what must it have been to gain any idea, that should not be flatly contradicted by another as positive, of the spirit that gave that face its spell? Altogether, she was a great trial to the ladies—and the elderly fathers of families who had not seen her—about Rose hill. Her reckless spirit shocked them as much as her unaccountable unfeatured prettiness disgusted their Venus creed of faultless noses and immovable lips and precisely-measured chins. They considered it nothing short of a swindle for a woman who could lay claim to no one of these recognised charms to set up for a beauty. The worst of the matter was, they were obliged to carry on the war with negatives, poor missiles after all; and spite of many desperate efforts in the cause of truth, they all agreed, these conscientious ladies and impartial gentlemen, who were determined not to become biassed by knowing her, that her nose was not Grecian, but then they could not support that statement by a decided declaration that it was something else; all knew, felt morally or immorally certain, that she was a young person of very low principles—anything but orthodox—but then came the hitch again; they could not give any defined form to the special species of heterodoxy to be laid to her charge. Some said she had a snub nose and democratically Low Church tendencies; others contended



she was inclined to aquiline—‘quite a hook, you know, my dear; you shall see her nose and chin in a year or two’—and Ritualistic perversities; others, again, that her proclivities were altogether and fearfully Roman. But all agreed in one thing—and such universal harmony was surely beautiful to see—that Beatrice, or, as Charlie Deve-reux had christened her, Flossy, Ingram was a flirt.

Yes, that was something tangible; and, with all the delight of truth-seekers long baffled by the illusory, they pounced upon the fact, grasped it firmly, and held it hard and fast.

‘But why should she be a flirt?’

‘She’s heiress of Ingram, a lady in her own right. What can make her flirt? What, indeed, but thorough inward depravity?’ And the doctor’s wife, who had never been seen speaking to a man of her own station until the advent of the weak-eyed doctor, crossed her hands severely on her stiff poplin dress.

‘Depend upon it, that girl knows what she’s about,’ Miss Grinigan said sagely. ‘She knows all isn’t gold that glitters; that Lord Ingram is not too old to marry yet; and that, stripped of her wealth and title, she would have a poor chance of a husband, with that little face of hers that hasn’t a good feature in it; and so she is trying her best to catch a husband while she has the chance. Poor thing! we must not be too hard upon her for making hay while the sun shines.’

‘Not blame her!’ Mrs. Prim ejaculated, putting down her muffin. ‘Now, I put it to you, Miss Grinigan; could a girl with good principle do it?’

‘No girl with *any* principle could do it,’ Miss Grinigan replied with calm decision.

So gossiped the wiseacres of Rosehill, and they were as near the truth as gossips generally are. The girl flirted, not because she elected to do so, not from a morbid craving after excitement, nor a paltry desire to be first with all, still less to catch a husband, but simply because she could not help it. She was born a flirt. She took to it as naturally as young ducks take to water; and although she was capable of finding amusement in other things—keen enjoyment, even perfect contentment—no sport had the keen zest of a good flirtation.

Fluttering about among the flowers, her hair tangled, floating on her shoulders in defiance of the impotent comb, she sported caressingly with the flowers, and pressed her lips to the rose with as dainty a grace, as bewitching a coquetry, as though Charlie Devereux or Harry Lyster stood envious by, and the action gave her equal pleasure.

‘Sweet, sweet lily-bells, how I love you!’ she murmured in low, thrillingly musical tones, that would not have jarred on ears attuned to the most *exigéant* sickly sentimentalism. Then she started up with an idea that surely the lily-bells never suggested to her; or, if they did, we can only say those spotless, pearly, empurpled sovereigns of purity are as great humbugs as the majority of human representations of the idea. The idea made her fling her hands over her head in uncontrolled mirth, while a merry, merry laugh echoed through the shrubbery.

‘Godmother, I’ve come to set your mind at rest,’ she said, as, having danced up the terrace, she hovered half in, half out of the French window.

‘I doubt that very much,’ was Mrs. Chirrup’s severe reply.

‘Well, I’m going to try. Give me credit for good.

intentions, at any rate. I'm going to make you a promise.'

'You'll only break it,' said the bright-eyed little lady, more complacently.

'I'll keep this one. It's not the one you requested, but it comes to the same thing, and it's more satisfactory because it's more plain. I won't flirt—with Mr. Blennerhasset—if I can help it.'

Then she was gone; only the dancing sunbeams left to mark where she had stood, only the blithe, carolling laughter thrilling out in the lawn echoing the audacious words.

Flirt with Mr. Blennerhasset! The man to whom women were first-class nurses, and second-rate housekeepers, and intolerable cooks; the man who grasped in his mighty mind all that was worthy the honour of being grasped; before whose rare utterances potentates quaked! Mrs. Chirrup felt she ought to be very angry, and was—with herself, for not being so.


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## CHAPTER IX.

### A MYSTERIOUS ABDICATION, AND A PUZZLING SUCCESSION.

'How I shall hate that man, to be sure!'

Miss Ingram spoke as she felt. She had been dosed with the cleverest lawyer in Ireland unceasingly for the last three weeks; ever since, in fact, he had signified his royal pleasure to unbend his usual stiff reserve so far as to shoot for a week with the only man who didn't bother him.



It was not that Lord Ingram had had many opportunities of bothering Mr. Blennerhasset, but the unfailing perception of the latter had divined rapidly enough that the nobleman was not one to bother under any circumstances. It was bad enough for Mrs. Chirrup to give the lie to her usually blithe satisfaction with her darling plague; to inveigh against flirting, because it might lower her in the opinion of the man whose opinion according to the critics was the one worth having. It was bad enough to have Jennings the housekeeper and all her satellites respond to the simplest question as to innumerable changes with, 'Sure, it's becos of Misther Blennerhasset's comin', Miss Flossy, an' isn't that a reason to be proud of?' But the crowning point was put upon her miseries when Lord Ingram—he, who never deigned to interest himself about mortal man, or woman either, who had uttered no comment when the First Gentleman in Europe had gracefully offered him a blue ribbon, who had made no remark when declining the proffered dignity, as he would have an officious neighbour's invitation to dinner—had thought it fit to remind his heiress of the coming guest.

'To think that my uncle should recognise my existence merely to intimate his desire that I should please this man!'

With this humiliating idea came a new one of the source of it. What a power this man must possess to be able to influence, not only the genial fairy godmother, who in her merry, cheery way set gossip at defiance, and pooh-poohed Mrs. Grundy and her opinions as blithely as Floss herself, but the calm, almost ascetic man who seemed hopelessly concentrated in himself, his name, his honours, and his heritage—all, in fact, that constituted Ingram.

‘Yes, he must possess great power; not of name or station or family—they would never care for that. It must be power of himself, cleverness, I suppose. But how I shall hate him—I do already,’ and Flossy tapped her pretty fingers against the marble edge of the fountain with considerable energy. ‘Give up my plans and amusements, merely because they might interfere with the equanimity or offend the fastidious taste of this horrid person! Very likely. If I did, he would consider it the ordinary course of things; but he shan’t have the chance.’ The fingers went with renewed vigour as she concluded. ‘I’ll bother his brains out.’ She was mentally beating a tattoo.

Standing there in the brilliant morning sunshine she looked exceedingly pretty, and she knew it. She did not exactly think that her profile was according to Canova—which it wasn’t—or that she was at all imposingly statuesque; but she did feel intuitively that she was very nice, with the roseate tinge on her cheeks, and the golden glory streaming over her white morning dress, and mingling in hopeless profusion with the blue ribbons of her little straw hat. So when a gentleman rode by the iron rail that separated the lawn from the park, it was only natural that she should smile a dainty little smile, and give a gracious little nod. That would have been the extent of her bad behaviour, had not Mrs. Chirrup’s dressing-room overlooked that identical spot where the path broke up between lawn and park, and had not Flossy detected her godmother—well, enjoying the view. That was too great a temptation to be resisted; so she fluttered over the lawn, and Harry Dillon reined in his horse when he had come as near as he could.

‘Oh, I’m so glad to see you, Mr. Dillon,’ she said, perching herself on a high bank trailed all over with

morning glory, and crowned with a glorious Norfolk pine.

‘Are you really, Miss Ingram?’

‘Yes, really; I’ll tell you why.’

‘No, don’t please; I’d rather have the fact without the reasons.’

‘Oh, then you don’t want to do me a favour?’

‘You know I shall only be too glad. I didn’t understand.’

‘You might guess that I wanted something when I was glad to see you.’

‘Ah!—instruct me.’

‘Of course I will,’ and it really was not the girl’s fault if her merry eyes undid the frankness of her speech. ‘We have no myosotis at Ingram, and I suppose that is why I set my heart on having some to complete my drawing.’

‘You shall have it very soon.’

‘Thank you, Mr. Dillon, and good-bye for the present.’

‘Oh that girl!’ groaned Mrs. Chirrup; ‘and to think Mr. Blennerhasset is expected to-day! I hope to goodness Charlie will come. It won’t look so bad her flirting with him, and he’ll keep her from anyone else.’

The breakfast parlour at Rosehill was a very charming apartment. It opened on to one of the broad terraces that ran round three sides of the house, and, from the superbly tasteful carpet to the tiniest ornament of fragile china, was, *par excellence*, Mrs. Chirrup’s room. Not only that, but it was the abode of Mrs. Chirrup’s friend; the counsellor to whom she went in every perplexity. Mrs. Chirrup’s friend stood in the corner. A very grave face had this friend, and two solemn hands that warned of a time flying by; a grave, musical, monotonous, sonorous voice had this friend, who

had warned and sagely advised Mrs. Chirrup for so many years that she had forgotten to count them, that broke forth hourly into a sweet low yet clanging chime.

Something had gone wrong. Flossy saw that directly she came in; and instead of sitting down, as any decorous young lady would have done, she went straight up to her godmother.

‘What is it, dear? You’re not really angry with me?’

One little white hand was on Mrs. Chirrup’s shoulder, the other round her waist, and the lady made believe to satisfy her conscience.

‘Of course, everything together.’

‘What’s the other everything?’

‘That Lizzie, now, just fancy—and to-day too.’

‘Has she run away with John?’

‘Really, Flossy, I shouldn’t wonder if you put it in her head.’

‘I didn’t, godmother, upon my word I didn’t; but tell me all about it. No, there’s John.’

‘Of course, and where should he be?’

‘Why, you said he had run away with Lizzie.’

‘I didn’t say any such thing,’ Mrs. Chirrup said severely.

‘What about Lizzie, then?’

‘She’s gone.’

‘Oh, she is. Who with?’

‘I didn’t say she went with anyone, and really, Flossy, I’m shocked at you. It’s bad enough as it is, I’m sure. She left a note to say she couldn’t stay any longer, and please to excuse her giving notice.’

‘Well, that is rather a come down after thinking of an elopement; and those prim young persons always do look so

suspicious. I never could look at her and John together without thinking of Gretia Green.'

'She was not a suspicious-looking person,' Mrs. Chirrup said testily, at this insult to her judgment. 'She may have been deceitful, but she wasn't suspicious-looking, or I should have been prepared for this ungrateful desertion. But I'm sorry I mentioned it at all, Flossy, I thought you would have been more sympathising.'

Once her godmother looked really grieved, Flossy gave herself up to condolences, and unlimited perusals of, and startling explanations and speculations concerning, the note left by the deserter, with the charming grace that was so peculiarly hers.

It was a queer letter, and so Miss Ingram acknowledged. The writer, who had a soul above—or below—grammar, did not seem to have any very clear idea of why she was leaving, except that she had to do it, although those who knew her spoke of her as a shrewd piece enough. All mention of the matter dropped when Lord Ingram entered the room, and the morning meal proceeded with due solemnity.

Lizzie's position in the household was not a very important one, but in Mrs. Chirrup's present fidgety state every trifle was magnified. It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise to be told that a young person was waiting to look after the situation, and after a moment's consultation with her friend in the corner, Mrs. Chirrup desired the stranger to be shown in.

The lady of Rosehill presented a very pretty picture as she sat in her low chair near the French window, her tatting occupying the quick, restless fingers, her brilliant eyes wandering from the clock to her lap, from that to the face of the stranger, for she was a high-bred woman, this little



lady with the silver-grey hair and dress to match, and never permitted herself to stare her dependants out of countenance without sufficient reason.

‘Have you been out before?’

‘No.’

‘Ah! Always lived at home?’

‘Yes.’

‘With your parents, I suppose?’

The girl paused awkwardly a moment before replying. She was a tall slight girl, with a remarkably fair face, and untidy brown hair falling helpless over the timid, startled eyes. Something in the frightened look awakened Mrs. Chirrup’s sympathy.

‘They are dead, perhaps?’ she said softly, apologetically even, to the wearer of that ill-fitting, glaring gown, with the birds catching at bunches of flowers all over its surface. The girl shook her head.

‘And your name is ——’

‘Kate.’

‘Ah! Yes. And what can you do?’

The startled look almost fled; a bright, eager expression took its place.

‘I can work, ma’am.’

‘But if you have never been out before I’m afraid you haven’t much idea of the duties of parlour-maid.’

A look of disappointment, so keen, so intense, came over the momentary eagerness, that it made the tiny lady’s heart ache. It was a very foolish, thing of course, but somehow she could not bring herself to dismiss the girl formally.

‘Shall she stay?’ she asked, turning to the clock.



That sage counsellor instantly divined the inquiry, that was of course inaudible, and ticked, as loud as possible,

‘Let her stay, let her stay.’

That settled the matter.

‘Would you like to learn?’

‘If you please, ma’am.’

Clearly the new parlour-maid’s forte was not speech, and perhaps it was a feeling that such was the case that spurred Mrs. Chirrup’s charitable intentions; but with the short sentence came a flash of joy over the pale pinched face, that threw a startling brightness over its squalor and poverty of outline.

‘You must come to-day.’

‘I can stay now, if you please.’

This was the longest speech she had ventured yet.

‘But your things? And you will want to tell your people,’ said Mrs. Chirrup; suddenly remembering she had not elicited anything respecting the former life of this girl, whom she had engaged to come and live in her house.

‘I brought my clothes, and father knows I was coming.’

She had a father, at any rate. That was all Mrs. Chirrup could discover, and she was obliged to be satisfied with it.

‘Just like Missis,’ the portly housekeeper said in disgust. ‘She goes about helping, and gives us another visitor to wait on. Why, any fool can see by the cut of the girl that she knows as much about parlour-maids as I do about angels. And take my word for it,’ she added to the butler, raising a cautioning finger, ‘whatever she may be, it’s nothing good she is. Look at her eye, that’s enough.’

'Sure, I'd rather look at the two, when I can,' was Best's rejoinder.

'It's all very well for you to draw your small beer,' the lady said, with stont dignity; 'but in my time a little cast was a mark of beauty.'

'Sure, ma'am, I'm bound to believe that; I can't contradict it, at all events, seein' it's too far back for me to remember,' was the butler's parting shot.

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## CHAPTER X.

### MR. BLENNERHASSET ARRIVES.

MISS INGRAM was particular at her toilet that evening, though she would scarcely have owned to herself that she was more fastidious than usual as to the exact position of the rose in her hair, and the graceful sweep of her gauzy skirts.

'Mademoiselle will wear a sash, surely?'

'Yes, the white one.'

'Helas! I shall be in despair if Mademoiselle insists. Only a morsel of colour to match that sweet rose?'

'No, I shall wear only white; but you may fasten another rose somewhere, if you have a very handsome one.'

'If Mademoiselle would only try the effect?'

'You must let me have my own way, Cerise,' was the impatient rejoinder; and Cerise was obliged to submit.

‘I wonder what he will think of me, this clever misanthrope.’ Her thoughts at last were taking shape as, after having dismissed Cerise, she surveyed herself critically. ‘Probably nothing. At any rate he shall not be able to say that his senses were offended by an overdressed miss, after having been gratified by the sight of such classically robed women as he may stoop to consort with. It is as well I should be particular, if only to balk the satirical propensities of this bear.’

A pleased smile stole over her face as she recognised the correctness of her judgment in the charm of the *recherché* simplicity of her snowy robe, of the single large rose which with its loose spray formed her coiffure, holding back the spiral, shimmering, golden hair. She wore no jewels of any kind nor ornament, with the exception of another flower that fastened the folds of her dress on one shoulder. Excitement, partly curiosity, partly certain rebellious designs, had deepened the shell-like tinge on her cheeks, and given an extra brilliancy to her eyes. ‘How godmother can make up her mind to alter her ways and habits for the time being to suit this man, merely because he is one that will be suited, I cannot imagine,’ she said, as she turned daintily away. ‘At least I shall maintain my independence, and read them a practical lesson on the snobishness of subserviency of the intellect.’

Lord Ingram and Mrs. Chirrup were in the drawing-room, entertaining Rohan Blennerhasset with that perfect courtesy that annihilates time, and makes the stranger of an hour as much at home as the acquaintance of years. Not that Rohan Blennerhasset needed such support; he would have been as little put out had their demeanour been as frigid as ice, as churlish as ill-breeding could make

it. But he recognised the gentle bearing of the stately host and the fairy-like hostess, and appreciated it as he would have appreciated rare old Johannisberg. It was growing near the dinner hour, and the tiny lady, almost lost in the depths of a bergère, began to cast anxious glances at the timepiece, which had once warned Le Grand Monarque that there was one who did not stay even for kings. Those fragile hands seemed to move with lightning speed, and no sign of Flossy. Would or could the perverse girl be late to-day, of all days?

These anxieties never once interrupted her graceful courtesies to the man who honoured Ingram Place with his presence, but they made her very miserable, and it was an immense relief when the door opened, and a tiny figure, dimly outlined in fleecy white, floated across the room.

‘Miss Ingram, Mr. Blennerhasset.’

A profound curtsey and a low bow; then the gentleman resumed his interrupted conversation, and Flossy established herself in a corner.

It was a very convenient corner, for the light did not flood into it, and from it the young lady could take accurate observations, as far as a low square forehead, heavy strongly-marked eyebrows, almost shaggy, a firm imperious mouth, a small slightly-pointed chin, and occasional flashes from stern, cold, questioning eyes, that had a trick of reading you through and through, could be said to afford data on which to form some idea of the cleverest man in Ireland.

‘The idea of making such a fuss about him!’ ejaculated Flossy contemptuously. ‘Why, he’s not nearly as imposing as Lord Woodenhead, who has only two ideas—

turnips and mangelwurzel; and I'm sure he's not anything like as good-looking as Charlie. I wonder can he waltz? He doesn't look as if he could do anything useful, with those nasty beetling brows and disconcerting glances. I'll ask godmother.'

In the meantime Mrs. Chirrup kept casting anxious looks; but now it was at that shadowy corner.

'She always dresses like that when she's made up her mind to flirt outrageously,' she sighed disconsolately. 'Not a necklace, nor even a bracelet. Goodness grant she won't take it into her head to go flying about the house. One consolation, there's no one here for her to flirt with.'

'Dinner is served, ma'am.'

Mr. Blennerhasset offered his arm to Mrs. Chirrup, and Lord Ingram took in his niece with grave quiet politeness. He never looked at her; never addressed her, except when decorum required. Nor did he ever manifest the slightest anxiety as to her behaviour; she was an Ingram—that was sufficient.

'Wasn't Charlie Devereux to have come to-night?' demanded Flossy of her godmother.

In vain Mrs. Chirrup frowned and shook her head. Flossy repeated her question till Lord Ingram took it up.

'I believe that is not of much consequence, since Mr. Devereux is not here.'

'Perhaps he will come, yet,' she persisted.

'If Mr. Devereux intended coming, he would scarcely run the risk of being late,' was the haughty reply.

'There he is,' as light wheels rolled up the gravelled walk; and Mrs. Chirrup felt that her troubles were beginning.

'Excuse me being late, uncle. Godmother, I know you

will. Flossy,' this in a lower tone, 'I shall devote my whole evening to making peace with you. How do you do, Mr. Blennerhasset?'

He was a bright, handsome young man, this Charlie Devereux, with a noble head, and a crown of clustering curls, and true, good eyes that looked merrily into yours, and a short upper lip shaded by a thick moustache. He uttered his half-laughing excuse to Lord Ingram, as gaily as though the peer's response had not been the coldest and stiffest of bows, and his pleasant ringing voice threw an atmosphere of life into the apartment that was very pleasant to Miss Ingram, as he took his place beside her.

'Now, Flossy, what's the news?'

'Oh, before dinner is the proper time for gossip.'

'That's why I knew it was no use coming.'

'Excuse me, I am thoroughly orthodox.'

'Since when?'

'Since twenty-seven minutes past seven.'

'Really? I'm sorry I didn't get here sooner; the transformation scene must have been something alarming. But come, are we friends? Look what I've brought you.'

He passed her a tiny bouquet of rare exotics, and she smiled her pleasure, pressing them lightly to her lips to inhale their fragrance, as she answered some polite commonplace addressed to her by Lord Ingram, and enjoyed Mrs. Chirrup's vexation. There was something intensely ludicrous to Flossy in her godmother's persistence in taking everything *au sérieux*, as well as in the fact that Lord Ingram would do the same if he only suspected it.

It was some slight consolation to Mrs. Chirrup that there was a sort of engagement between her niece and this handsome young man, whose flowers she pressed to her lips

at a dinner-table. Neither Flossy nor Mr. Devereux had ever spoken on the subject, but it had been an understanding between the families for years. If she could only manage to give a hint of it to Mr. Blennerhasset, whose ideas about women were stricter even than her own, he might not set down her darling godchild as one whose levity placed her far below the pale of his interest. But she did not see how this was to be done; and in the meantime the airy nothings, the gay retorts, that passed like wildfire between the two young people, irritated her almost beyond endurance. Lord Ingram took no notice, and entered into the Russian question with Mr. Blennerhasset, who disposed of the subject in the sharp, quick way peculiar to him, that yet seemed to leave nothing untouched; the energy of which was not at all impaired by a few rapid glances across the table at what formed a very pretty picture, to say the truth: a tiny head, with a coronet of golden hair, bent slightly, just enough to deepen the shadows of the colourless eyes, and to throw a classic light on the dainty, defiant *nez retroussé*, just enough to make it seem that she was listening very intently to the words that fell from the gallant, dashing young Irishman, who had won his sobriquet of handsome Charlie, as much by his fearless smile and irresistible humour as by his faultless profile and clustering wealth of chestnut hair. Yes, it was a very pretty picture, Mr. Blennerhasset thought; while with calm, dispassionate eloquence he exposed the policy of Nicholas, and the contemporaneous blunders of the English Ministry.

‘I’ve come down to stay a while, auntie; am I welcome?’ demanded Charlie, having accompanied the ladies to the drawing-room.



'Of course you are,' Mrs. Chirrup said, smiling in spite of herself. 'Only you must promise not to bother me.'

'Oh, that will be delightful,' said Miss Ingram, clapping her hands. 'I shall not be bored after all.'

Mrs. Chirrup looked reproachingly, but the rebuke was wasted, for the servant was announcing Mr. Dillon.

'I could not get the myosotis sooner,' he remarked, after saluting Mrs. Chirrup. 'But I hope I am not too late.'

'Oh, how beautiful!' said the girl delightedly. 'How very kind of you to take so much trouble.'

She could no more have helped offering him the intoxicating flattery of her pleased expression than she could have helped feeling grateful for a bouquet that had cost a ride of ten miles, and probably the loss of a dinner, for Harry Dillon had so timed his arrival, not caring to become Lord Ingram's uninvited guest.

Mr. Blennerhasset, who at the moment entered with his host, was puzzled. Mrs. Chirrup was scandalised; she could not tell Mr. Blennerhasset that her niece was engaged to two people, however she might manage about one.

Mr. Dillon was a young Irish gentleman farmer, and, like Charlie Devereux, had been a Trinity student. Both had a fund of wit and humour almost inexhaustible, both were better pleased to lounge near the low chair whereon sat enthroned this piquant, merry, dazzling little creature, who thanked them for small services in the most musical of voices, with the most bewitching smiles, than to cultivate the cleverest man at the Dublin bar; and Miss Ingram was well content that it should be so, that the fun and the wit, and the gay sallies and the sparking repartee, should be her portion of the feast. She had what she enjoyed,

and others could have what they enjoyed. Surely a more equitable division could not be made. Why should she, with so lively an appreciation of badinage and jest, and metaphor, and the mysticism of poetry, be forced to famish on cold, hard, prosaic realism, while the food she longed and pined for was cast as pearls before swine?

‘Flossy, Flossy, what will Mr. Blennerhasset think of you?’

It was rather an unfortunate appeal that of Mrs. Chirrup’s, as she paused on the landing to say good night.

‘You darling little godmother, I do hope he’ll think something dreadful.’

‘There’s every probability of it.’

‘He’s such a high and mighty prince, it would be a pity not to shock him. He appears to think everybody is thinking how they will look in his eyes, and what opinion he may form of them, and everybody who does not is a heretic—as if it was of the slightest consequence;’ and she turned away with a resentful remembrance of the cold indifference of the hard blue eyes that had glanced once, just once, at her, as the cleverest man in Ireland said good night.

A low shriek as of intense fear startled her, as, candle in hand, she entered her room. It was a large apartment, with soft lace draperies on bed and table that looked ghostly in the light of that one candle, and that took a thousand fantastic forms under the flickering smiles of the fire. Scarcely distinguishable from the white draperies was a slight, shadowy figure, shrinking away out of sight in guilty fear.

‘What is the matter?’ Flossy demanded, advancing near enough to distinguish that the intruder was a thin,

pale girl, with features that, in spite of their pinched outline, were rarely beautiful, and wistful eyes that had a mortal terror in them just now.

‘I—If you please—I lost my way.’

‘Who are you, then?’

‘I’m—Kate.’

‘Are you the new parlour-maid?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, don’t look so frightened, it’s all right. Will you take out my flowers for me? then I shall not want Cerise.’

‘Oh, yes, if you please.’

Miss Ingram sat down before the toilet table, and Kate, with her quiet, soft touch, loosened the flowers, and permitted the hair to fall in soft flaky masses. Miss Ingram glanced down at the taper fingers.

‘You’re not a bit like a parlour-maid,’ she said; then she glanced at the old-fashioned cotton gown with its queer pattern and awkward fit, then up at the classic head above, at the face crimsoned with a sudden flush. ‘I didn’t mean to hurt you,’ she added quickly. ‘Now I shall be able to manage for myself. Good night. Perhaps,’ as a sudden thought struck her, ‘this is the first time you have been away from home?’

‘Yes.’

‘Ah! and of course you feel strange. But you musn’t fret, you’ll get used to it,’ and Flossy nodded kindly to the girl, whose wistful eyes compelled her pity.

‘I like to be here,’ said the girl eagerly.

‘Do you? Well, I shouldn’t like it at all; but then I’m afraid I’m a very bad person.’

‘You bad?’ and the girl’s surprise was unfeigned.

‘You see I can’t do things—at least—not with a good grace. I want everything my way—and if I had to go away among strangers I could’n’t say “I like it,” as you did; I should be miserable. But you musn’t stay any longer; you’ll have to get up early, I know.’

But still the girl did not offer to stir. ‘What is it? are you afraid?’

‘If you please—I don’t know which way to go.’

‘I’ll show you,’ Miss Ingram said readily, throwing a shawl over her shoulders.

The passages they passed through were empty, and Miss Ingram paused at the end of one.

‘Those are the—Mrs. Burton’s rooms. Will you be able to find yours? I don’t know which it is.’

‘Yes, thank you.’

The words were uttered shyly and timidly, but the look from the wistful eyes was grateful, oh, so grateful.

‘I wonder shall I ever be reduced to that?’ mused Flossy, as she retraced her steps; ‘to be so thankful for anyone coming a few yards with me as I would be now for the conferring of some great boon.’

‘Has your bell-rope broken that you are obliged to invade the servants’ quarter?’

Lord Ingram and Mr. Blennerhasset were passing along the corridor, when they encountered Miss Ingram with her crimson shawl drawn round her shoulders and her hair flying.

‘No, my lord,’ she retorted defiantly. ‘I was showing Kate to her room.’

‘Showing who?’

‘Kate, the new parlour-maid.’

‘Indeed! I should have imagined you would have rung for another servant.’

‘I could have done so, but I preferred doing it myself. Do you know, uncle, she looked so grateful for such a little thing.’

Lord Ingram stared in utter perplexity. He was not accustomed to notice whether ‘persons’ were pleased or otherwise, though he always took it for granted that they were. Flossy, who had begun to tell him of it out of sheer perversity, grew earnest and spoke her thoughts.

‘Wouldn’t it be strange, uncle, if you or I should ever come to be so thankful for so slight a favour?’

‘I am not given to indulge in such speculations, Miss Ingram.’

‘Well, but uncle, it might be you know; at least it seemed possible just now, when I looked at that poor girl’s unhappy face. She looked so unhappy, uncle, as if she had never known what it was to be really and heartily gay.’

‘I hope, Miss Ingram, you are not getting any of the new-fangled sentimentalisms into your head. The young woman is, I suppose, a well-behaved specimen of her class, and it will be a pity if you spoil her, as you seem inclined to do, by accrediting her with desires and feelings and powers of enjoyment or suffering not pertaining to her order.’

‘I shall do nothing of the kind,’ said Flossy indignantly, in a more disrespectful tone than she had ever before used to Lord Ingram. ‘But I suppose it is no crime to consider her human. The Bible says we’re all dust, and I don’t read anywhere that one is of finer clay than another. If it is so, however, it is not always the rich people who have it.’

With a defiant curtsey to the two gentlemen she swept past to her own room, tossing back the untidy hair, and wrapping tighter the bright shawl, that gave her complexion a dazzling brilliancy and made her seem the most charming of little rebels.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### MR. BLENNERHASSET ASTONISHES MR. DEVEREUX.

Few that ever entered the library at Ingram Place forgot it, with its fascinating blending of the mediæval and the modern, of the sternly grand and the frivolously beautiful. It was a queerly beautiful old room, with its mulioned windows stretching from roof to floor, its lofty elaborately carved cornices, contrasting in their massive grandeur with the fantastic airiness, the fairy-like elegance, of the buhl tables and tiny cabinets. Grim but exquisitely carved goblins clutched hangings of softest lace; a model of the Sphinx, mysterious, terrible to human speculation, in its wonderful passionless beauty, its unfathomable calm, its realisation of a supernatural conception of an existence devoid of any phase of passion or feeling, a being in which is known neither anger nor love, neither scorn nor yet sorrow, only moveless repose, looked down on low luxurious couches, on a rose-bespattered carpet, on a thousand devices for ministering to pure and unadulterated sensual enjoyment. The innumerable shelves of books that

lined the walls were but an accessory to the apartment ; they did not obtrude themselves as in common libraries, defying you to see anything else, nauseating all but the veriest bookworm by their ponderous riches. Stretching from end to end, almost from side to side, as these shelves did, covering in fact an immense space, and affording accommodation to a magnificent collection of volumes, it was yet possible to see something else. You could so place yourself at a tiny reading table, that only harmonious draperies soothed your suddenly uplifted eye, only a splendid sweep of lawn and park and wood bounded your actual vision.

Pacing up and down the room was Rohan Blennerhasset. Yes, pacing up and down ; though a table neither small nor narrow was completely littered with his papers, just arrived. Pacing up and down as though something had arisen of such a magnitude of importance, that the labour of his life, his career, that was to him father and mother and family and friends, had suddenly been thrust aside to make way.

And yet, what had disturbed him ? Only a woman's mocking smile, only a girl's shimmering golden hair ; and yet the one would vanish, and the other fade and dull, when his name would be written in indelible letters in the history of Ireland, when his career, an accomplished fact, should fill men's minds with wonder.

'I must work,' he said, suddenly pausing in his walk. 'I have no time to waste ;' and putting aside all superfluous thought, with a decisive yet deliberate action, he sat down to his work.

He was a handsome man, with a somewhat stern face. Cold blue eyes, that had a trick of looking into your

motives, and contemptuously flinging aside the veil of actions interposed to baffle scrutiny, betrayed the lawyer by nature. A power of rapid and correct condensation of circumstances and words, nay looks, into evidence, revealed the lawyer by education. A lawyer by profession, yet rather a studier of mankind than a profiter by their follies, he prided himself on his acute perception of character, his power of analysing and dissecting men's minds, whether they would or no.

He was a broad-chested man, morally, mentally and physically, with a great deal of backbone, neither weak nor yielding: a strictly honourable, upright man, so erect that in his unchastened pride he was apt to reflect severely on his weaker brethren, whose spinal strength could not at times prevent them lapsing into a feeble stoop; to be careless to remove the stumbling-block that was no impediment to his untired feet from before the faltering steps of a wearier traveller; to regard sternly and unforgivingly those who could descend to courses he, in his untried, untempted integrity, loathed and despised; to pass by on the other side of those who fainted under the burden of life, that sat so lightly on his sturdy shoulders.

He was soon immersed in his work; his vigorous mind was busy unravelling the mysteries of a web so intricate, a skein so tangled, that he sometimes wondered whether he would have to put aside his mighty reasoning and resort to the woman's device, whether he would be reduced to cut the sturdy knot by his keen instinct, whether he would be forced to jump at conclusions, instead of reasoning them out bit by bit. In the very midst of his battle with inconsistent facts and missing links; just as his powers had been exhilarated by a tiny taste of victory, braced by the staring



danger of defeat, the baize-covered door swung open, and a musical voice demanded,

‘Are you there, Charlie?’

Such a bewitching little figure as it was in its white muslin dress and blue sash, and garden hat hanging from one arm; but Mr. Blennerhasset only thought it very provoking.

‘Mr. Devereux is not here. Can I do anything for you, Miss Ingram?’

‘I’m afraid not. Mr. Devereux promised to teach me the last new rules of croquet. You wouldn’t be able to do that, I suppose?’

‘I fear I should prove a bad substitute for Mr. Devereux,’ he said, with stiff politeness.

‘Oh, but then you know it’s not everyone can play like Mr. Devereux,’ she said demurely. ‘Besides, I suppose croquet is beneath your notice; excuse my troubling you.’

‘Flossy, Flossy.’

‘Here, Charlie,’ and she flitted out on the terrace. ‘I was afraid you had gone to Rosehill, and forgotten.’

‘Miss Ingram, I did not expect that from you. I did not, really,’ said Charlie, with a great deal of mock indignation. ‘Nevertheless, the croquet lesson must be put off.’

‘Oh, very well; I shall get some one else to teach me.’

‘You won’t do anything so ungrateful. I am delaying it merely to oblige you.’

‘Well, I don’t feel a bit obliged.’

‘No? Well, I had something very nice to tell you; but——’

‘Go on, Charlie; don’t you see how curious I am?’

‘Are you really curious?’ he demanded, looking at her with an intensely comical surprise.

‘Yes; are you astonished?’

‘I am at your acknowledging it.’

‘Ah, you see I get into the trick of telling the truth while you are in town.’

‘Well, now, just to punish you, I shall not tell you. No, I really shall not say a word about that charming little Arab that I had landed last week, not a syllable about the precise orders I gave to have her cared for in town until I could bring her here, nor about the charming freaks she exhibited on her way here from town, or of all the admiration her paces excited——’

‘Oh, you good old Charlie, come along to the stables.’

‘Miss Ingram, Flossy—Baroness that is to be—stop for pity’s sake; what will Lord Ingram say?’

‘Why, that you led me into it,’ was her saucy reply, as she shot past the terrace, down the steps, and away round to the stable-yard.

‘Oh, I must have a ride to-day, Charlie,’ she exclaimed, in breathless admiration of the distinguished foreigner.

‘She’s very fresh. She came down in the van, you know. You had better wait a few days, till she is thoroughly broken in.’

‘Oh, she looks so gentle.’

‘She is, miss,’ the groom assured her; ‘quiet as a lamb, sure.’

‘I’m not a bit afraid, Charlie; and there are people coming this evening, so that I may not be able to ride to-morrow.’

‘I should like to have tried her myself first——’

‘Now, I’m going to dress.’

Mr. Blennerhasset was standing on the terrace outside the drawing-room conversing with Mrs. Chirrup, when

Flossy came flying down to kiss her godmother, dressed for her ride.

‘Good-bye, darling; I’ve got a new horse.’

‘My dear?’

‘Yes, the Arab that Charlie promised, and she’s such a beauty.’

‘When did she come? Is she safe?’

‘Oh, of course;’ then she turned to Mr. Blennerhasset, as innocently as though she had not spoiled his day’s work and destroyed, for the third time, some very complicated reasoning.

‘Why don’t you ride, Mr. Blennerhasset? The shooting begins to-morrow, and you won’t have time.’

‘Thank you, I have so much work by this post——’

She was slightly piqued by his refusal, and did not scruple to interrupt his excuse.

‘Look! there she is, godmother. Is she not charming?’

‘Very fiery, Flossy.’

‘No, auntie,’ said Charlie; ‘quite the contrary.’

He sprang off his horse to assist Flossy, but Mr. Blennerhasset was already by her side. One light touch on his hand and she was in her saddle, her golden hair flying over her shoulders, her cheeks flushed into a vivid pink by excitement, her eyes like stars.

‘Thank you,’ she said, smiling as graciously as though it was only Charlie Devereux or Harry Dillon, instead of the man whose name was on everyone’s lip. Then the smile dimpled into a something that would have been very mischievous and very audacious in anybody else, but that was merely deliciously pretty in Flossy Ingram.

‘I must not detain you any longer from your work, Mr. Blennerhasset. Good-bye, all.’

Then the two cantered away.

'Why, Flossy, have you been coming out blue at all lately?' asked Charlie.

'Dear me, I hope not. Do I show any alarming symptoms?'

'I must do you the justice to remark that I have not observed any' incipient signs of the disease; but I never heard of Blennerhasset unbending to any lady under a three-volume authoress, at any rate. I heard that he once offered a chair to the terrible woman who wrote "An Analysis of Dust and its Relation to Spirit," but I shouldn't have credited that he had assisted you to your saddle unless I had seen it.'

'Perhaps, Mr. Devereux, an intellect keener than yours has detected within me germs of greatness. No more rude familiarity, sir; who knows into what I may develope?'

'Into a woman with a mission, perhaps.'

'It's quite possible. I must admit that I haven't the safeguard against freaks of genius.'

'What safeguard?'

'Why, the love for mending stockings. I don't think I ever mended one in my life, so there's nothing to prevent me from astonishing the world with a thrilling romance of blood and powder and railway accidents.'

'I've just had a revelation. Perhaps Mr. Blennerhasset wants a few lessons in the art of flirting, and having heard of your proficiency ——'

'Mr. Blennerhasset flirt?'

The idea was too much for Flossy's risible faculties, and conversation was lost in contagious peals of laughter; and all the time a sad, wistful face was looking out of the

library window, watching the retreating figures until they were out of sight, and then watching the place where they had been.

‘Don’t you think that horse is very unsafe?’ Mrs. Chirrup asked anxiously.

‘No,’ Mr. Blennerhasset said in a very dubious tone; then after a few polite remarks he re-entered the library. The slender figure that arrested his rapid steps puzzled him. At the first glance he thought it must be a visitor; but in an instant he had taken in every detail of her peculiar dress, her shrinking, uncertain manner. Unconsciously his inquisitorial nature betrayed itself; he saw the girl shrink more into herself, but he did not see why.

‘Do you want anything?’ he asked coldly, but not unkindly, seeing she did not move.

‘If you please—that horse—will Miss Ingram fall off?’

‘No; I think not.’

‘Thank you.’

Still his questioning eyes pursued their relentless task, almost independently of their owner; and she shrank out of the room with a timid, guilty air.

‘What was she doing here?’ he demanded, following the train of thought that suggested itself. ‘Nothing wrong, perhaps, but it is very plain that she felt such an idea was not one that could never attach itself to her. Queer style of person to be in Lord Ingram’s household.’

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## CHAPTER XII.

## SIPS OF THE GOLDEN CHALICE.

LIFE at Ingram Place was very pleasant now. The house was not exactly thronged with visitors, to use a fashionable term : there were a score of rooms unoccupied ; but those that were appropriated were used by some select friends of the peer, and one or two of Mrs. Chirrup's, who, taken all together, formed a very pleasant nucleus for the society of the place to gather round. Lord Ingram only knew the best people of each sort ; the highest and best bred, the most distinguished in literature, the best known in art. Parvenues, whether as to position, intellect or breeding, were excluded, and the consequence was that a peculiarly refined taste pervaded the intercourse at Ingram Place, a perfection of good breeding that never degenerated into dullness.

It certainly would have been hard to have been dull with Flossy Ingram enjoying her first instalment of the peculiar delights at the command of the possessor of rank, affluence and taste. It was the first time for twelve years that the magnificent old Place had been thrown open to visitors, and hers was a nature to enjoy such pleasures to the full. Without high intellectual gifts, she had keen intellectual senses, exquisite susceptibilities for enjoyments of the very highest order. She was not a musician, her execution was not brilliant enough, yet music entranced her ; she had no technical knowledge of art, nor even the faintest desire to acquire it ; perhaps it was her good sense as much as her idleness that had revolted from a continuance

of the dismal, watery water-colour sketches she had executed under the auspices of a painstaking drawing-master ; yet, a gorgeous mass of colouring piled by a master's hand, a few bold strokes outlined by a painter, a dainty, delicate bit of feeling or poetry portrayed on canvas, transported her into a world of magic. She had never thought of writing a line of poetry in her life, but she extracted every scrap of sweetness with an unfailing instinct out of each volume she seized, whether the quaintly garbled legends of the fathers of thoughts set to music, or the flowing rhythm of the poets of the day.

How keenly exquisite is her happiness now, as she stands entranced, listening to Herr Joaquin drawing such weird, sweet language out of that pealing organ ! Tears stood in her eyes as the strains died away, and the Herr left the instrument, and involuntarily she glanced at her neighbour for that sympathy which it is her high privilege to feel and appreciate, her keenest grief to be denied. Robert Dalzell did not deny her ; he gave her glance for glance ; he permitted her to see that he tasted the pleasure she could not enjoy to the full unless it were shared.

He was a thin elderly man, elderly, though he was scarcely forty yet, with a slight stoop, and broad streaks of grey in the scant dark hair ; a man with whom the world had gone ill while he cared for it, and well when it had become too late to make any difference. He had a pale, patient face, kindly and gentle, but with deep furrows across the broad noble forehead, that told of disappointment keen and bitter enough to have soured into hopeless cynicism a baser nature.

‘Thank you, Herr Joaquin,’ Flossy whispered after a while, turning from her position at the marble balustrade

to look with worshipping eyes into those of the mighty magician who had evoked such spells.

'Ah, ah!' he responded, smiling at her looks rather than her words. 'It is goot, it is goot; you should haf a soul for music.'

'Should have? I could not enjoy it more.'

'Ver goot, so far; but you haf not one soul for music alone. That is the one great thing.'

'If you mean that I enjoy other things as well, you are right.'

'Ah, so, I thought so. Hein! you are but one woman,' and he turned away with a sort of pitying contempt. 'Music is one mistress who will haf all the devotion.'

Flossy dismissed the vagaries of the master, to revert to and linger on the echoes that yet thrilled her being, and Robert Dalzell did not disturb her. She could not have stood thus silently with everyone, contentedly feasting on sounds yet rolling in her ears; but she felt that he was sharing the feast—felt it, though he spoke no word to tell her so.

'On the terrace, as usual,' Constance Bonverie said, with a mischievous sparkle in her handsome languid eyes, as she paused at a window. 'Somebody asked where you were just now, and I told them you were here, though I had not seen you.'

'Does godmother want me?'

'No; not more than usual. I believe it was Mr. Blennerhasset made the enquiry.'

Just then Rohan Blennerhasset came along the terrace, scanning the two earnest countenances turned outward, yet scarcely noting the wide expanse of park and woodland.

'Can she be flirting with Dalzell too?' was his mental



query. 'Surely she does not want to make a fool of him too?'

His firm step was the third break in the girl's reverie, and she resigned herself to real life. We can scarcely blame her, though, if she sought to make it as pleasant as she could. She addressed a few polite nothings to Mr. Blennerhasset; then she turned to the patient, gentle-looking man, whose brow was so deeply seamed.

'When will your picture be finished, Mr. Dalzell? You know you promised me the first look.'

'I do not know when it will really be finished. Probably not until it ceases to be in my possession; but I will show it to you when you please.'

'Now, Mr. Dalzell,' she said, eagerly.

'Now? With the strains of a mightier work in your soul, you will find mine poor.'

'No, no; and I am a very Sybarite for pleasure. You cannot satiate me. I don't want to take my enjoyments in moderation. If I might, I would feast my eyes while my ears were yet thrilling to the wonderful sounds. Show it to me now, if you please. It will not break in on my reverie; it will only continue it.'

'Still, I would rather show it to you to-morrow.'

'Very well, if you prefer it,' she said; 'but please let it be early.'

Even the sad, grave painter smiled back at the coaxing, childish face, and Mr. Blennerhasset's lip curled in silent disdain. He despised himself thoroughly for feeling compelled to notice this frivolous butterfly, this gay careless girl, neither beautiful nor witty, whose only charm was her levity. What a charm was that to enthrall him! The hearty contempt he felt for his own idiocy extended in a

modified degree to Robert Dalzell, and found vent as the two men strolled up and down the terrace while Miss Ingram fed the swans, Harry Dillon holding the basket, and looking unutterable things at the long lashes and snowy eyelids, that could no more help drooping roguishly at the implied compliments than they could help being full and well shaped.

‘You are more easily pleased in confidants than you used to be, Dalzell. Has fame made you so good-natured that you are ready to flatter the overweening vanity of a butterfly merely for the sake of pleasing?’

‘Miss Ingram is not a butterfly exactly; she has higher aspirations than you think.’

‘What! does she bewitch you so far as that? When I saw men drawn under her influence I thought they were attracted by her pretty fooleries, but I did not go so far as to imagine that they were slaves to ideal wisdom. Not a butterfly? Why, if not that she would be nothing.’

‘I am not an analyser of character, you know, Blennerhasset, but I think you wrong this kind young lady. It may be simplicity on my part, but I fancy her gaiety is rather the happy bubbling up of a great vitality than the fermentation of a vitiated nature.’

‘Your perception is either keener or kinder than mine. I must confess I never looked upon a morbid craving for admiration as a sign of healthy vitality.’

If the painter had thought anything of Mr. Blennerhasset’s opinion, so foreign to his own trustful simple nature, he remembered nothing of it when, the next morning, Flossy sat quietly before the picture. She uttered no ecstatic sounds, no critical admiration: she was simply happy, with a happiness that was not alloyed—rather

rendered more exquisite—by the unconscious sad reflex of the painter's spirit.

'I want to show it to Herr Joaquin, Mr. Dalzell; may I? He has a soul to comprehend art.'

'Certainly,' the painter said, smiling at her earnestness.

'Thank you. He gave me so much pleasure yesterday, I want to give him this great one to-day.'

'Hein! What is it, then? A new sonata, or another Tourbillon?'

'No, Herr Joaquin. But do come; I know you will be delighted.'

'Ach, and I am ready to be delighted, Fraulein Flossy; but this road haf not got the music-room at the end.'

'No; I am taking you to see a picture.'

'A picture? You said my soul was to revel in art.'

'So it shall, Herr Joaquin.'

'Ach,' he grunted. Music was all art to him; but he accompanied the pretty Fraulein, who thought she enjoyed his music when she did not know technically fugues from cantatas.

She placed a chair for him with a dainty grace, and stood behind while Dalzell uncovered his work, and Rohan Blennerhasset, who had come to examine it during Flossy's absence, watched the effect on the musician. Miss Ingram stood perfectly silent to permit Herr Joaquin to enjoy the pleasure she had experienced, but after a moment or two the Herr turned his stolid face to the painter and then to her.

'Hein! It is very fine, but it is not music.'

'No, it is not music,' Flossy said, looking in puzzled wonder at the phlegmatic old man; 'but it is art, appealing to another sense it is true, but still art.'

'Ach, that is very goot,' he grunted, rising from his chair; 'but I have but one soul, and that is for music.'

'One soul! What has that got to do with it? Have you got only one sense?'

'I know not if I haf more. I want not more. It is so great this one that it is enough.'

'No, no, it is not enough, Herr Joaquin; we have five senses to gratify. By pleasing only one you debar yourself from four-fifths of the happiness that is your lawful heritage.'

Five senses to gratify. That was her creed.

'Five senses to use, too, Miss Ingram,' Rohan Blennerhasset said with judicial severity.

'Of course; but if one did not use them where would be the pleasure?'

'And the duty? Surely that ought to come first? Our existence as moral beings cannot be one of mere pleasure.'

She had always a sense that he was blaming her, and she only pranced the more viciously.

'I really don't see why,' she retorted defiantly. 'Cannot the two conditions be united?'

'Sometimes; and the grave lawyer's eyes said only too plainly, 'but not in your case.'

She turned from the painter and his friend, and stood looking after Herr Joaquin, till she forgot her momentary irritation in a speculative theory, and was glad to ask some one to help her out of it.

'Mr. Dalzell, how is it? That man, with his great gifts, his wonderful talent, which perhaps I am too ignorant and too superficial to comprehend, but of which I have yet a very magnificent conception, dim it may be, but not base

or low, cannot appreciate the manifold enjoyments of life as much as I do. Can you explain?’

‘The only explanation I can give is that it is frequently so. You will see men with talents of a rare order, utterly devoid of appreciation of all that it is not in their power to evoke.’

‘Then, as I can evoke nothing, the law of nature would be that I should enjoy nothing.’

‘Scarcely that,’ and the patient furrowed brow broadened with kindly sympathy. ‘It is, perhaps, because you have neither the painter’s, nor the poet’s, nor the musician’s skill, that you have the taste of all. You devote yourself exclusively to none, but you welcome all in turn, and your sympathies widen, your life deepens, as your power of enjoyment increases, to a degree that is almost incomprehensible to the wrapt devotee of any one art.’

‘Thank you, Mr. Dalzell, for making my creed of pleasure not only easy but blameless. I felt, under Herr Joaquin’s reproving glance, as if I had been guilty of some crime;’ and with a happy, saucy nod she left the temporary studio.

‘I wonder at you wasting reason on one too superficial to wince under its sarcasm,’ Blennerhasset remarked.

‘I don’t know that it is superficiality,’ Robert Dalzell said quietly. ‘It seems to me rather a marvellous capacity for enjoyment, a power of deriving happiness from all sources; an inestimable gift, that very few possess.’

‘I did not know you had fallen into the modern habit of calling ugly things by pretty names, and then labouring under the delusion that you have rendered them “beautiful for ever.” Pray, what do you call that? I call it frivolity, pure and simple.’

He pointed as he spoke to a tiny figure seated on the edge of the marble basin of a fountain, dabbling her little pink fingers in the water with a perfect consciousness of their beauty and tapering elegance, while a handsome moustached gentleman bent almost over her, heedless of the spray the little fingers sometimes caused to spread more widely. His attitude was one of intense devotion, hers of rapt attention. They could see plainly enough from that studio window the downcast lids, the sudden sparkling upward look of absorbed interest, as she threw her whole soul into the conversation, as though it were to her the most important thing in life. So it was just at that moment. She had only been introduced to Mr. Clinton an hour before, but he was taking great pains to amuse her; and it would have been both hypocritical and ungrateful to have pretended not to be interested; and certainly Miss Ingram gave no one occasion to say she was one or the other just now. The painter smiled, and sighed at the sunlit picture; with its artistic grouping of form and colouring that gratified his soul, with its higher charm of expression of life—nay, of the very essence of life, its mute revelation of the interchange of flashing ideas, sparkling raillery, graceful sentiments, that baffled the pencil, that could never be transferred to canvas; and his sigh was deeper than his smile.

‘Yes, unadulterated frivolity I call it,’ Blennerhasset repeated. ‘She has not known that man two hours.’

‘And I call it an exemplification of my theory,’ said the painter.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

## SHE IS NOTHING TO HIM.

THE new parlour-maid did not find much favour in the household at Ingram Place. She was too shy and retiring, or, as they expressed it, too mopish, to be anything good in their eyes ; and her shrinking, guilty look, when accused of any trifling fault, gave her no chance. But Mrs. Chirrup had taken a great fancy to the girl, and kept her constantly employed near herself.

Mrs. Chirrup's friend had a good deal to do with this. In reply to mental enquiries, induced by the pity evoked by the unconsciously appealing eyes, the round-faced clock had ticked, cheerily and blithely, 'Trust her, trust her ;' and the dear, kind, pink-cheeked old lady did trust this sad, pinched-looking girl, with the silent tongue and the suspicious manner. Yes, she trusted her very much, in spite of a hundred puzzling incidents, in spite of all that the girl had against her in herself. But, of course, she laid all the blame of this to the charge of the clock. Mrs. Chirrup never pretended to be credulous, or trusting, or generous, on her own account ; but if her time-honoured friend led her into imprudences she could not help it. So in spite of all the housekeeper's head shakes, and Mademoiselle Cerise's supercilious remarks, and the old butler's cautious admonitions against nameless strangers, with great black bruises on their foreheads covered with a lot of untidy hair, Mrs. Chirrup trusted on.

That bruise was a great eye-sore to Mrs. Chirrup. Her big heart swelled with pity and indignation every time she



looked at it, or at the great lock of hair that generally concealed it.

‘Poor little thing!’ she would whisper to herself—the girl was a good head taller than her. ‘Poor child; it was pitiful to get such a cruel blow on such a poor pale face. How miserable her life must have been! And yet they want me to punish her for not being frank and happy-looking.’ And Kate, looking up from her work, would find the bright hazel eyes yet brighter with tears, and the kind little grey-haired beauty would say,

‘There, now, you have worked enough; go for a walk in the park, and get a little rosy, do you hear? Let me see you when you come back, till I see if you have done what I told you.’

‘Yes, ma’am.’

‘And, Kate, you must get a little fat.’

‘Yes, ma’am.’

‘Ah, but saying “yes” won’t do; you must try—it’s your duty.’

‘I will try,’ the girl would answer dubiously; and that was one of her longest speeches.

Kate had no love for long walks, and when sent out by Mrs. Chirrup she generally ensconced herself behind the thick bushes of the shrubbery, just in view of Lord Ingram’s private room; and there she would sit for hours, stealthily watching the tall, stately figure, sitting at a table studying something before him, with bowed head that neither servants nor visitors were permitted to see. If anyone happened to come near she would steal away, and this was another count in the indictment drawn up against her in the servants’ hall. No weather prevented her seeking this lonely spot; the rain might beat, or the wind might blow,



yet she would crouch behind the bushes, as if fascinated by the outline of that spare figure that moved sometimes so restlessly before the windows. Constant gratification did not pall upon her; day after day the hungry eyes rested on the bent head so erect before visitors and servants, before every human gaze but hers; day after day the deep shadow of unrest deepened on the troubled, weary face.

Mr. Blennerhasset's visit had not yet come to an end. Mrs. Chirrup had invited several of the surrounding gentry to meet the illustrious guest. Her heart was sore that her niece had made such an unfavourable impression, as she could see was the case; but though she blamed Flossy for it, she could not refuse the girl's petition for

'Just a quadrille and a waltz, you know, dear.'

Mr. Blennerhasset was standing on the lawn below the terrace, happily unconscious of the momentous question that had just been decided, when a white-robed figure, with hair floating in the wind, came flying down the steps.

'Constance, Constance! we are to have a dance.'

Constance Bouverie looked languidly up from her book with a faintly interrogatory 'Yes?'

'Yes,' Miss Ingram said, pausing on her toes; 'and I'm the happiest girl alive. Now do come and have a waltz on this beautiful sward, and put away that ugly old book. I feel exactly like a ballet dancer, just as if I could fly.'

'No, thank you. Perhaps Mr. Blennerhasset will.'

The heiress of Ingram stopped short in the midst of her first round, and desisted Mr. Blennerhasset watching her with a compassionate, half-amused look.

'Pray don't stop, Miss Ingram; I'm only sorry I cannot play the jew's harp for you.'

'Thank you for your gracious permission, Monseigneur,'

she said, dropping him a profound curtsey; 'but I think I had better defer my waltz till I get a more appreciative audience and—a partner.'

'I regret I cannot offer myself just now, having my hunting boots on; but perhaps you will favour me with the first this evening?'

'Do you really waltz?' she asked mischievously.

'Not often; but do I look so very awkward?'

'Oh, I don't know about that; I was thinking of how you could spare time—from your work, you know;' and she glanced at the unused gun on the grass, that had lain there for two hours at least.

'Oh! I am not so busy just now. But, really, I should have expected to find you in the blues to-day, and you rush about as if you were quite happy.'

'I am happy. Why shouldn't I be?'

'All your admirers away shooting.'

'All? How very uncomplimentary.'

'Excuse me ——'

'No, don't apologise; I must excuse you, for I don't feel in a humour to quarrel. I'm happy; outrageously, ridiculously happy.'

And she crossed her hands, and sat down in the plenitude of her content on the soft grass, with the chequered sunlight falling through the gracious trees on her fair young face with the rose gleam on it. This superabundant, apparently causeless happiness was a mystery to a man who was not content to be happy unless he could give a good reason for being so. To Constance Bouverie, whose blood flowed sluggishly and calmly, it was simply an absurdity.

'Why so happy to-day, in particular?'

'I don't know, except it is that I am alive,' she said blithely. 'I feel so glad and gay that the whole universe seems mine for a possession to rejoice in; I seem to have an ownership in everything bright and beautiful that ministers to my pleasure.'

There was something intoxicating in the girl's mad glee that was too positive, too full of a magnificent vitality, not to be contagious. Rohan Blennerhasset yielded to its spell. Constance Bouverie closed her book for the third time and laid it on the grass, and resigned herself to be amused by the contest between grave, keen satire and a girl's lively, light, but sparkling banter. Perhaps only an Irish girl could have entered into the contest so keenly as Miss Ingram did; perhaps only a Celt could have appreciated to the full the privilege of being assailed by the polished shafts of a mighty intellect, the power of skirmishing with her light artillery against the heavy, splendidly appointed forces of an illustrious enemy; the exquisite delight of throwing a magnificent advancing column into confusion by a brilliant fusillade; of retreating rapidly to a secure position, escaping annihilation by the skin of the teeth. Oh! such a contest is glorious to an Irish girl endowed with all the drollery, the dashing, reckless daring of her race, with moderate talents and ordinary education, such as may enable her to throw sufficient shape and discipline into her light infantry. To Miss Ingram it was exhilarating to a degree an ordinary Saxon can have no conception of, and to Blennerhasset it was scarcely less so. Even calm, apathetic Constance Bouverie caught the infectious enthusiasm, and began to think there was something in flirting besides attracting admiration or angling for a good establishment.

Sometimes sitting erect, openly on the alert, sometimes half leaning on the violet bank with affected listlessness, with the rose gleam deepened into a glowing damask, the crimson lips parted eagerly, the golden hair pushed recklessly back from the snowy forehead, the starry eyes gleaming and glancing, and flashing and dancing, Miss Ingram's irregular features proclaimed audaciously their title to beauty, a title too that was incontestable. The profile defied you to discover its weak points, its faulty outline; the full face dazzled, bewitched you with its glamour of a beauty independent of form and feature. So thought a man crouching behind the arbutus bushes, a man with evil brow and restless eyes, that watched the group in the sunny glade near the terrace.

'They told me she warn't handsome, that she had a turned-up nose, and no figure to speak of, and a doll. The fools; she's worth twenty dolls, and she's *his* niece. What will he care for a daughter he can't have much love for, by this, if he has an heiress like that to turn to for consolation? Where will be my vengeance? What good will I have done these long weary years?'

The sun set, and the dinner-bell rang, and the three still sat in the glade, chequered no longer, but peopled with the mighty shades of evening that softened with their magic touch everything they looked upon, gave beauty to the simplest outline, depths of shadow to the plainest colours.

'We'd better dress, Flossy.'

'Yes; and there come the hunters. Do come and ask what sport; we shall have time by dressing quickly.'

Still the merry banter went on while they crossed the lawn, till questions and answers about the game succeeded.

Mr. Clinton was first, and he immediately seized upon Miss Ingram, giving her a humorous sketch of the day's doings, filling in just here and there to enhance the interest. It will be remembered that Mr. Clinton had taken the trouble to amuse the charming young heiress, who had appreciated him so thoroughly, before Mr. Blennerhasset had deigned to do so; and she bestowed her undivided attention on her present companion, as though hearing about the sport was her sole object, and hearing it from Mr. Clinton especially. Then she told him about the coming dance with girlish glee, and George Clinton was neither old nor ugly enough not to be interested in the prospect. He was a handsome military man, with a well-bred air of insouciance to strangers, that made his flattering deference to intimates very fascinating. He was an accomplished flirt withal, and was not the man to submit quietly to being eclipsed by a mere boy like Harry Dillon, or even by gallant, dashing, handsome Charlie.

'Surely this ought to be a lesson to me,' Rohan Blennerhasset muttered with contemptuous bitterness to himself. 'After seeming interested in what I was saying, she can throw her whole soul into her eyes when talking to that fop, as though her life hung upon his words. It is not that the girl is a flirt; it is that she is nothing else. Literature, learning, intellect, are nothing to her, only so far as they enable her to act the better.'

Charlie Devereux was in his element helping the servants to put some hastily arranged wreaths round the wax lights in the music-room, which Flossy had appropriated to dancing. He went to dinner late, in defiance of Lord Ingram and the ladies, and left the table with the latter.

'Oh, you good old Charlie,' Flossy whispered to him. 'It wouldn't have been half a dance without the flowers.'

Many of the people who had been invited to dinner were grave members and ponderous-looking peers and pompous dowagers. But Mrs. Chirrup had invited a few young people for the dancing especially, so that the impromptu ball-room was soon almost full. Close to the marble terrace, all ablaze with light, ringing with the mirth and laughter that floated from the open windows and doors, with the rapid tingling music, with the light steps of the dancers, a man stood under the shadow of a giant laurel. He had come as near as he dared, as near as it was necessary for his purpose, for every dancer whirling by was distinctly visible. Few escaped a passing scrutiny, but his gaze was concentrated chiefly on the heiress of Ingram, as she whirled in the mazes of an entrancing waltz, or flirted with all the abandon of her mood during the pauses of a quadrille. If she looked charming in her plain girlish day-dress, she looked fairy-like now in the white, puffy, cloudy robe, that gave her much the appearance of the ballet-dancer she had said she felt like.

The night waned and waxed into morning, but still that man stood there. His purpose had not been answered yet.

Suddenly a marked pause took place in the dancing, the room began to thin, the band played operatic selections instead of galops and polkas—soft, sweet airs, that floated out on to the lawn.

They were going in to supper, and the tramp—for tramp he was—for the first time shifted his position. He soon found the window he wanted, and then he had secured what he sought. Lord Ingram was full in view,

and his niece was only a few paces distant. Did the stately peer glance with any pride at the slight girl who would inherit his name and honours? Did his eye kindle at the admiration so freely accorded to her? Did he too feel a triumph when her brilliant repartee had made her the centre of a vivacious circle composed, not of mere brainless dandies, but of men whose brains gave lustre to their rank and blood?

Not once. He scarcely seemed to see her. She was an Ingram; therefore, she was above suspicion. The Ingrams were always capable of taking care of themselves. The arrogant pride of the man would have recoiled from the idea of anyone bearing his name requiring to be protected from impertinence of any description, or being incapable of selecting precisely the proper associates.

But she was not an Ingram near and dear enough for him to feel her small triumphs, to exult with a personal pleasure in her merry social victories. She might have been the veriest doll that ever sported flaxen hair and a turned-up nose, for all the difference it made to him.

'It is well,' the tramp said. 'He is still the childless man. She is nothing to him.'

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### TWELVE O'CLOCK OF THE NIGHT.

EVERYTHING was quiet at Ingram Place. The household had retired to rest, for hours were early when there was no especial dinner or reunion. Not a light was visible

anywhere, and the moonlight fell silently and lovingly on the sleeping flowers and the grand old guardian trees, on the glistening white gravelled walks and on the smooth velvety lawn, with its marvellous mosaic, its clumps of fir, its hundred crowns of Norfolk pine.

Into an open casement this same moonlight peeps with an impertinent stare, a saucy, quizzical enquiry of the white-draped bed as to why it should show itself to-night, when the friendly old pendulum was telling twelve o'clock of the night, when every other bed in the house was shuttered up from the inquisitive rays. The same enquiry was clicked louder and louder every moment by the clock in the morning-room, whose ticking was heard all over the house, as the voice of one who would say, 'Don't tell me what's going on; I know all about it, better than you possibly can.'

It was an upper room into which the moonlight entered so curiously, in which the click of the clock echoed so loudly; a bare, scantily-furnished room, with a little bed and a washhand stand, and an old chest of drawers surmounted by a small looking-glass—a carpetless, comfortless attic.

Kneeling in the middle of the room was a young girl; her small thin hands almost covering the pinched, pale face. Round her like a glory fell the cold radiance, playing with the soft brown hair, dallying with the white forehead, the slender throat, the taper fingers interlaced so pitifully.

Crunching on the gravel walk, and the timepiece has sounded twelve o'clock of the night. Late visitors to Ingram Place, surely. Trembling, shrinking, the girl rises. Shuddering, she quits the room. Quivering with a nervous dread at every sound, even the rustle of her dress, she glides with stealthy step along the corridor and down the



staircase. Thus, trembling, shrinking, shuddering, she goes to meet her father. Only her father, Heaven help her. Heaven help all who go thus to meet a father.

‘It’s glad to see me you are, not a doubt of it,’ he sneered, in low tones that had something of bitterness in their mockery. Then the pent-up tenderness of her clinging nature flowed out, and she took his hand in hers.

Oh, father, daddy, I am glad to see you.’

‘Only you think I’ll disgrace you in such fine company?’

He would not analyse the jealousy that prompted the question; he would not admit that he clung to the affection of this girl who had lived so many years with him, and had not yet lost the gentleness Heaven gave her; but he regretted his words when she looked up at him with a sad longing in her dark-rimmed eyes.

‘You know it’s not that, father.’

‘Now look here,’ and with a passionate determination he put from him the tenderness of her words. He would not see the pleading, loving girl who called him father. Resolutely between himself and her he placed the form of a convict—not a crime-blackened villain, not a hardened, irreclaimable woman, but a girl, young, fair to see and full of promise to him, but hapless and hopeless, irretrievably disgraced. Only at that picture would he look, only by that irredeemable degradation would he be moved. Grasping the girl’s slender wrist he went on—

‘Look here, and listen to what I tell you, and don’t forget it. You’re the daughter of a villain. Remember that, always remember that.’

‘No, father, I won’t remember that,’ she said, with a bravery that surprised him. ‘I’ll forget everything, but that you are my father, that it’s only me you have in the

world to comfort you, that whatever you may be to others you are good, always good to me.'

'But I tell you no!' he said, lashing himself into ungovernable fury. 'I am not good to you, don't think it; I tell you to remember that I am a thief, a burglar, a convict, a murderer, maybe. Remember that you bear my name, but remember always, always, the brand that is on it, the brand that you inherit; that is never, no never, to be effaced from you; that must scathe and burn your soul till death, though you never committed a crime in your life; that will send you to the convict station at the first breath raised against you, though you were innocent as the angels in Heaven.'

She shivered like one in an ague, as her life dread took such awful shape.

'How long are you going to keep me here?'

'Where can I take you, father?'

'Where? Why, into the house, I suppose.'

'Oh, daddy,' and she pressed her hands to her side like one in pain; 'it's not goin' to steal you are from Mrs. Chirrup?'

'Pray, when did you get to use such ugly words? Well, yes, we'll have it out; it'll make you remember better, though it's not so genteel. Why shouldn't I steal from Mrs. Chirrup as well as anybody else?'

'She's so good to me.'

'Is she? She'll trust you all the more.'

'She does trust me; that's it. She does trust me so much.'

A black frown overspread his face, as he grasped her wrist with almost brutal ferocity.

'All the more reason why she should be fooled. Now

let this nonsense be done, or to the gallows you go as sure as she went to the hell of Botany Bay. Bring me into the dining-room.'

He had not lost his mysterious influence, and he wielded it with terrible mercilessness. She turned irresolutely, then paused.

'Oh, father, she's so good to me.'

'And I'm not, I suppose. Is that it? Is that what your maudlin comes to? You would see your father starve for a stranger.'

'Father, you know I would do anything,' she said, wringing her hands, 'only ——'

'Only what you could? Well, never mind, I can manage without your help, maybe, or perhaps you'd like to call the servants to take Balfe the robber. It's a reward they'll be giving you.'

She made no answer to a taunt that stung her to the quick, except to interpose her fragile figure in his path.

'Father, daddy, you musn't rob this kind lady. Oh, don't.'

'Musn't? Keep back, I tell you.'

There was murder in his eyes, but she never quailed.

'Father, dear father ——'

He flung her from him as though she were some loathsome thing.

'Back, back, I tell you. Go and call your friends to take your father; but don't stand between me and my vengeance.'

What should she do? She heard the chink of broken glass, of bolts withdrawn; she saw the dark figure disappear from the clear moonlight, and yet she did not move. Why should she? What would she effect?

A step on the lawn, and her father was yet in the house. A cold dew stood on her forehead, her blood seemed turned to clammy moisture that exuded from every pore. What if he were a burglar and a convict? He was the only parent she had ever known. He had not filled her life with those petty persecutions that mark a little as well as a wicked mind; that engender the bitterest hate, the cruellest sense of wrong; he had even in a measure protected her from those who would have done so. It was horrible to think of him cooped up in a trap without a chance of escape.

She darted across the lawn just as he emerged laden with such booty as he could carry.

'Make haste,' she whispered in terrified accents. 'Someone's outside watching.'

'All right. Do you lock the door; and take my advice, keep a quiet tongue in your head. You're an accomplice in the act, and it would be as ugly for you as me, d'ye see?'

No one crossed her on the staircase, there was no one in the long corridors, and with the old pain at her heart she stood at last in the bare, moonlit room, locked in with that ghostly bed with its white covering, that gaunt press, that dim mirror out of which looked queer weird shapes.

'What would they do on the morrow? What would they say? What would they think? Would they suspect her? When would the robbery be discovered? Who would find her out first? Would they believe her all guilty? Or would they show her any mercy? Was it possible that they might not suspect her, but put it down to a burglarious attempt?

The agony of a lifetime was comprehended in that one awful dread—'Would they find her out?'

## CHAPTER XV.

## HOW THE QUIET PARLOUR-MAID LEFT.

MRS. Chirrup was very much puzzled. Miss Ingram was very indignant.

‘It was too bad,’ she said to Charlie Devereux, ‘to suspect a girl just because she was a stranger, and was awkward and nervous, and Mr. Blennerhasset ought to be ashamed of himself, heaping vague suspicions on one whom he could not accuse of anything tangible.

Yes, Mrs. Chirrup was puzzled. She wouldn’t own it, not even to her friend the clock, which was very ungrateful of her, but she was dreadfully puzzled. She had a great pity for that wistful pale face, with its sad, sad story of a loveless childhood; and it did violent battle with her veneration for Mr. Blennerhasset’s penetration. ‘Keep her in sight,’ had been the lawyer’s advice. ‘Keep her in sight, but say nothing.’ Very good advice, no doubt, very easy to give, but just a little perplexing. Say nothing!—of course she would say nothing, because she had nothing to say; and as to keeping her in sight—an imperious ring of the bell brought the girl to her. There might have been a little hesitation, a little trepidation in Kate’s manner of coming; but she came, she was there.

Not even with the clock clicking, ‘Take your time now, take your time now,’ could Mrs. Chirrup exercise even common patience; she was in a perfect fever to get the thing over somehow.

‘What were you doing on the lawn last night, Kate?’

The pale, pinched face grew paler and more pinched till it resembled that of a dead person.

‘Me, ma’am?’

‘Yes, you.’

‘You gave me leave after dinner.’

‘I didn’t know you were in the habit of staying out till one o’clock.’

‘One o’clock?’

‘Weren’t you on the lawn last night between twelve and one?’

‘N—o. What should I do at that hour of the night?’

‘What, indeed?’ echoed Mrs. Chirrup impatiently, considering that the matter had ended very satisfactorily. ‘Come and brush my hair, child.’

Soft, silky, with great waves running through it, was the still luxuriant grey hair, and Kate’s hands glided over it with a soft mesmeric touch, but never by any chance did she meet the bright hazel eyes that watched her out of the glass. Presently she spoke, and Mrs. Chirrup began to think her nerves must be seriously out of order, so discordant seemed the tones of her voice.

‘If you please, will you let me go home?’

‘What?’

‘I want to go home.’

‘To-day?’

‘Yes; let me go to-day.’

‘For how long?’

‘For—always.’

Mrs. Chirrup turned round aghast. Never had she noticed so plainly the stealthy, downcast look Mr. Blennerhasset had observed.

‘How have I ill-treated you, Kate?’

'You have been too good to me, but I can't stay ; please let me go.'

'Oh, this is too bad ; just as I had got used to you,' and tears of grief and indignation stood in the pleasant brown eyes. 'You are a very ungrateful girl.'

She made no answer ; then a new idea came to Mrs. Chirrup. The poor girl was home-sick, of course ; she would let her go for a few days ; and so it was arranged. Kate quitted the room in the quiet, noiseless way peculiar to her, and stood face to face with Mr. Blennerhasset.

She knew at the first glance that there was no hope for her in the relentless justice that gleamed, oh Heaven, how cruelly, in those steely blue eyes, that was written on the implacable brow.

What a terrible thing is Justice to us poor mortals, what a fearful two-edged sword is it for us children of an hour to toy with ! What have we to do with that which, untempered by mercy, would annihilate our race in a moment, or hurl us into everlasting torment without an instant's warning ? And yet there was no pity, no relenting, no sign of sorrow for the ignorant, it might be sorely tempted sinner ; only crude, stern justice for the sin. A hunted look came into the girl's eyes as she read his face, such a look as may come into the eyes of a poor hare before the dogs have startled her, and before she has commenced the doubling and winding that is such agony to her, such keen fun to them, before the end comes that is death to the fugitive, and very good sport to her pursuers.

'I want to speak to you ; come this way.'

She followed him into the library. Erect, cold, severe. 'No mercy, no allowance for weakness or temptation or ignorance,' was written plainly on Rohan Blennerhasset's

stern brow, and the girl knew it with an unerring instinct, though she did not shape the knowledge into words. Mr. Blennerhasset stood on the rug, with his back to the fire, not languidly but with an absence of all human emotion, and the outcast of the Thieves' Latin knew that she stood before her accuser and her judge.

'Now listen to me attentively,' the accuser said; 'and if you are a wise girl you will profit by what I am about to say. The head butler has reported to his mistress the disappearance of some valuable plate. With Lord Ingram's permission I have despatched him to the police-station. Are you willing to secure for yourself the utmost amount of leniency, by confessing your accomplices? No; don't speak in a hurry, take time to consider the consequences of a refusal.'

She did take time, for though he waited nearly two minutes, she had not yet spoken.

'You are aware, I suppose, that if you remain silent there is nothing left to do but to give you in charge as soon as the policeman arrives, when you will doubtless be committed for trial. You look young to have committed a crime whose punishment must be transportation.

The hunted look deepened in intensity.

'Oh, don't send me to gaol; don't.'

'I have no wish to do so, unless you compel me.' After a pause, during which the piercing eyes that never wandered read guilt in every line of that pinched face, he added,

'You do not seem anxious to secure the means of escape. I have pointed out the only ones that exist.'

In a sudden paroxysm of fear she clasped her hands, wailing piteously,



'Don't—don't send me to gaol. Oh, don't.'

'Will you tell?'

'Don't let them take me,' she almost shrieked.

'Who stole the plate? Where are they to be found?'

A despairing moan, as she swayed to and fro, was all the answer he could elicit.

'You had better come this way for the present,' he remarked. She followed to a spare bedroom on the second floor, in which he locked her, and returned to the library.

'She will tell, she is frightened,' was his conclusion; and he had not altered it when the policeman arrived. A servant was summoned to show him the room, which the men entered together.


It was empty.

Mr. Blennerhasset was summoned to assist in the search. Ransacking wardrobes and trunks and drawers; under the beds and sofas and tables and chairs, they hunted for the fugitive; behind towel racks and doors, into all sorts of impossible places, they peered, in vain. Only an open window testified that the room had been occupied since Mr. Blennerhasset had locked the door so securely. This window looked out on a smooth grass plot; it was twenty feet from the ground, and there were no projections beneath it, only a smooth wall, with thick ivy torn and dragged.

'Who is it I'm to take, sir?' grinned the bobby.

'Jump down there, and you'll very likely find a trail,' was the gentleman's retort; but Mr. Wheezer was a stout man, and seeing the joke likely to turn against him, he declined with thanks.

Mrs. Chirrup sat pettish and discontented in her pretty



morning-room, having a terrible squabble with the clock, that would say nothing to comfort her.

‘How can she go away when I felt so sorry for her poor bruised face?’ she said. ‘She’s gone by this time, I suppose.’

‘Gone away, gone away,’ wailed the clock.

‘Yes, I know,’ the silver-haired lady said testily. ‘What’s the good of your dinging that into me, you stupid old thing. Tell me when she’s coming back.’

‘Can’t come back, won’t come back,’ sang the clock.

‘I don’t believe you,’ retorted the little lady, jumping up. ‘Just tell the truth, or I’ll send you to a lunatic asylum with your diseased brain.’

‘Gone for ever, gone for ever,’ said the clock persistently.

‘You’re a tiresome old thing, after all,’ said Mrs. Chirrup, going out of the room indignantly; ‘very stupid too. I won’t listen to you.’

‘If you please, ma’am, Kate is gone.’

‘What if she is?’ exclaimed the lady irritably. ‘Must you ding it at me too?’

‘I believe we may consider this conclusive proof of conscious guilt,’ Mr. Blennerhasset remarked, coming towards her. ‘I am sorry for you, my dear madam, to have your trust abused, but it is better than that you should continue to harbour one so dangerous.’

‘My dear sir, I gave Kate leave to go,’ Mrs. Chirrup said; considering that everything and everybody had conspired to annoy her.

‘Yes, but you don’t know——’

‘Excuse me, I do know; she came and told me the very first thing. But I never can keep anybody I like, and she

was a girl that could be quiet. I do hate those people who talk, talk, talk, till they talk all their brains out, and then can't stop.'

'I grant you talking is a very tiresome thing, but it has its uses at times. So if you will permit me——'

Mrs. Chirrup resigned herself to the lecture; but instead of a lecture she got a succinct account of the state of her plate-basket, and the course taken by the lawyer.

It was all mystification to Mrs. Chirrup. There seemed no reasonable doubt of the parlour-maid's guilt, yet somehow Mrs. Chirrup did not feel as grateful to Mr. Blennerhasset as she felt she ought.

'Of course, it's very nice of him to be so anxious, and quite right of him to be so highly principled,' she said confidentially to her prime favourite, handsome Charlie; 'but somehow it's abominably nasty.'

'To be sure it is,' said Charlie sympathisingly. 'Why couldn't he let the matter drop, and the girl too? He's a good fellow, a fine fellow; but if she's such a poor little bit of a creature, it's hardly worth while frightening what life she has out of her.'

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE TRAMP'S SECOND VISIT.

TIME had not dealt gently with Lord Ingram of Ingram Place, and the change is more plainly marked as he sits now free from prying eyes, free from the *noblesse oblige*

that weighed down and crushed out every natural emotion. The last twelve years had not passed as lightly over the lord as they might over a commoner man: perhaps it would not have been respectful to do so. Lines and wrinkles marked the haughty forehead, the aristocratic nose and chin had grown more unyielding, the finely curved lips had forgotten how to smile, the blue, clear eyes, so like Rohan Blennerhasset's, had lost the trick of brightening into life at the sound of two little feet pattering along in baby disdain of aristocratic quietude, at the touch of two tiny soft white arms, that ignored the peer, to twine about pa's neck.

What though there was a Miss Ingram, who came at stated times to the Place? She was not the saucy chatter-box who twelve years ago had talked wiser lore to her lordly father than ever he had learnt at college or in council chamber. The present Miss Ingram, Baroness Ingram to be, might be a charming girl, but she did not call him father, she did not call Ingram Place her home. Now that her school life was over, she would reside more at the Place and less at Rosehill than formerly, but not because of any desire on the part of either uncle or niece to enjoy each other's society, simply because it was the proper thing to do.

Lord Ingram has no fear of being disturbed in his study. Not even his own particular body-guard, misnamed a valet, dared intrude without knocking; so my lord was not afraid to take out a tiny portrait, and placing it on the ebony table before him, scrutinise it with melancholy earnestness. It was only a portrait of a child, with marvellous dark dreamy eyes, that looked out at you full of a solemn wonder, a smooth white forehead, and pouting

baby lips that had curves of saucy archness ; a sweet pretty face, set in a framework of flossy curls, but shadowed by a far-away expression, that the painter had caught or imagined.

‘It was there, and I never saw it,’ he murmured painfully. ‘I thought the man was a fool when he painted the shadow that I could not see. But I know now that I might have seen it had I looked.’

He sighed, partly in pity for the face that was lost, partly in pity for himself. For he pitied himself, this childless old man, but he would permit no one else to do so. The blow that might have broken a weaker nature, and softened a higher one, had but hardened his. His gaze wandered from the portrait to the large low window, in whose frame was set a dusky picture of foliage, with golden clumps of sunlight peeping through. Lord Ingram had had the shrubbery brought up very close to this end of the house, and only a patch of velvet sward lay between the open window and the circular belt of glossy laurels gleaming in the low western sun, flinging back a golden sheen on the tall dark firs behind, that rose higher and higher in the distance till they crowned the slope.

Lord Ingram could not tell when he first saw that dark figure standing between him and that belt of laurel ; standing in the glorious light of sunset, but not lit up with its glory ; casting off its radiance to stand defiant in its cold, black misery. He only knew that it was there, and that instead of rising to summon assistance, he sat looking at it till it stood in the framework of the window.

Only a tramp. Nothing more. A stern beggar, if you will, but only a beggar. A strange one to stand in Lord Ingram’s private shrubbery, to step across the low window-

sill, to confront unannounced the insolent patrician who denied himself to dukes, and flung back with the pride of the heir of a hundred generations the condescension of royal princes, the descendant of a feudal race that had never in all its haughty line given to the world a prouder trampler on plebeian dust than its present representative.

For a time he stood motionless. Lord Ingram could never tell how long, he could not count by minutes or seconds in that strange stupor that had crept over him; he measured by his excited passions, the wild hopes, the keen agonies that surged over him in that indefinite space, and it seemed an age. Then the stupor cleared away, and he saw the intrusion in its proper light. A member of the rabble had presumed to force himself upon him, Ralph O'Regan Ingram of Ingram.

'I knew it was no use for the like of me to ask to see your lordship,' the intruder said in strangely humble tones; 'so I made bold to come upon your lordship to save you from doin' a wrong you might be sorry for.'

'You save me from doing a wrong!' repeated Lord Ingram in accents of scathing contempt. 'What can there be in common betwixt you and me to render such a thing possible?' and Lord Ingram pushed the table from him, and stood erect in his magnificent pride and aristocratic comeliness.

'Yet I tell you, my lord, it is simply as a matter of justice I am here. I'd be sorry to do you an injustice.'

'You have chosen a very paltry excuse for your insolent intrusion. Quit the house at once, or I will shoot you down like a dog.'

There was cruel, unmitigable truth in the clear, stern voice, in the cold, pitiless blue eyes.

'Sure, an' it's yourself that would, and no doubt at all about it. Didn't ye send Tim Ronan to break stones on the road, for taking a hare you couldn't miss out of thousands; and didn't you turn out his sick wife and six babbies, when she couldn't pay the rent? But why not sure, when one of your lordship's little whims was crossed even though it might be by a hungry man, who needn't have been hungry if he hadn't been honest? Didn't you drive handsome Jack Bergin, that never owed a man a shilling out of the country, because he wouldn't own himself your slave, body and soul, as well as your tenant? Didn't you rack-rent him out of the place, because he wouldn't crawl under your feet till he hadn't an inch of manhood left, till he was the worthless caitiff all low-born wretches are in your eyes? And do I think that pity or consideration 'ud stop your hand from takin' my life? Sure, I'm nothin' but a peasant born, dirt and dust in your eyes, my lord, to grow the vegetables for your table. But, though I'm not an honest man, I'm a just one; oh, I'm very just, my lord, not just like you, that's not to be expected, but just in a fashion of my own, that makes me risk my life to tell you my story. It's so little I have to say, my lord, and whether you grant or refuse my petition, I must go away quietly, but say it I must; and if you had a daughter, may be you'd do as I do.'

Vague recollections oppressed Lord Ingram, and bending forward he asked,

'Who are you?'

'Sure it's not of myself that I'd talk to your lordship, said the tramp, still with the same incongruous humility 'It's a slip of a girl I come about. She's fourteen, about an' I felt sorry for her; an' I thought, though you wor :

hard man to the poor, you might be sorry as well, if you only knew. The assizes come on next week, an' it's transported she'll be, an' more's the pity, for there's the makin's of a good woman in her.'

'Good or bad, what is it to me? What interest do I take in your wretched lives?'

'Sure, I know that,' and the humility that was so like suppressed fierceness deepened. 'But I wanted to tell your lordship what a pitiful life the poor creature led, all along; the way she was brought up to sin for a living; the way she was shut out from every chance of knowin' good from evil.'

'Spare yourself the trouble and me the details. It's the old story. You're all thieves and rogues because you cannot help it; that's your creed, I believe, and to a certain extent it's mine. But while you see in it a plea for mercy, I look upon it as an additional reason for extermination.'

'Sure, an' it's not for the like of me to contradict your lordship, or to remind you of the foolish notion that we vermin have souls as well as bodies; or that we wouldn't be so bad if we had the chance to be better. It's in the blood, it is, the badness, sure, isn't it, my lord? An' a gentlemen or a lady born couldn't be so vile as us, no matter how they wor? It wouldn't be in the blood, would it, my lord? How could a girl be honest, and be my daughter?'

Again came the vague and shifting recollection disturbing the peer. Perhaps it was only those restless, fiery eyes. They were enough to fidget an ordinary person.

'Who are you?' he demanded, for the second time.

'A robber, my lord, a returned convict; a man who holds lightly the life of one who comes betwixt him and



his purpose ; a man who has so little regard for the laws of Heaven and earth, that he would think less of felling you to the ground than of wringing the neck of yon strutting peacock.'

What was it kept that nervous hand from raising the pistol that always lay on the table now ?

'Your name ?'

'Anything but that,' said the tramp, with a grim smile, that contrasted queerly enough with his humility. 'But what of that ? I tell you what sort of reptile I am, and I ask you, again, what chance my daughter has of being honest ?'

'Have you nothing more to say ?' the nobleman asked, wondering why he spoke the words.

'Nothing more ; only that she is her father's only child, that she will leave him very desolate, and that to the weight of his ruined soul will be added hers. Think of that when you sit on your bench, and let it move you to pity when you pass judgment.

'Enough of this,' and Lord Ingram waved his hand haughtily.

'Yes ; perhaps it is more than enough, more than enough. What right have I to try to turn you from the misery that threatens you ?'

'Threatens me !' and the clear blue eyes flashed with patrician disdain. 'Fellow, do you mean to bully me ?'

A strange weird hollow laugh the tramp laughed, a laugh of such bitter merriment that the blackest scowl were more mirthful.

'Bully you, my lord ? I wouldn't bully you for the world, and in this thing least of all, but may I not know

if my poor girl will have any chance? Will you think of her bringing up?’

‘I shall think of the evidence before me and the nature of her crime. I have said.’

Lord Ingram was prepared for a passionate outburst of rage and grief, such as ‘those people generally amuse themselves with,’ but he was not prepared for the diabolical look that came into the face of the tramp, that did not die away, but only sank back into the cavernous eyes whence it had leaped forth with such unholy exultation.

‘And so have I. Good even, my lord.’

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### A RACE FOR A LIFE.

‘COME quietly along by the houses—that is to say, what you call the houses—and we’ll pounce upon her.’

‘I’m agreeable, I’m sure enough,’ the burly policeman replied. ‘Bless you, sir, I’d rather go asy than quick any day in the year.’

‘I can understand that,’ rejoined the sharp clerk from the Four Courts, Rohan Blennerhasset’s factotum. ‘It’s rather a misfortune for a man in your profession to be so stout. However, don’t let the girl escape, that’s all. If ever you ran in your life, run now, for I don’t see another policeman anywhere, and it’s too good a chance to be lost. I saw her go into a house not five minutes ago. If she

should take to her heels, don't mind a little puffing and blowing. I'll make it worth your while.'

'Stout is it? Arrah, now don't be poking your fun at me, Mister Bignoles. Of course it's my best I'll do; but is she such a villain, out-and-out?'

'Dreadful,' and Mr. Bignoles shook his head severely, until the long, rather dirty-looking grey beard wagged solemnly ludicrous condemnation. 'She has deceived so many, but especially ——'

'Ah now? Is it a gay desaiver she is? Sure, I thought that was generally laid to the other side.'

'If you will allow *me* to talk, I was going to explain. She deceived her mistress ——'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Bignose, entirely, but what else am I to catch hould of her for? Desaivin isn't a lawful offence, ye see.'

'She is a thief, a burglar, a housebreaker; goodness only knows what.'

'Or—badness—to be polite. Och, but it's joking ye are. No? Well, that's out-and-out, and she but a slip of a girl.'

'There, there!' exclaimed the clerk excitedly.

Emerging from an isolated building, that from its shape had evidently once been a tower, was a girl, apparently fourteen from her size and figure, but with the face of a woman, pale and pinched, weighted with the shadow of a fear that had dilated the eyes and drawn deep blue circles round them. She looked round anxiously, but the two men had withdrawn, stooping behind a low wall till she should be fairly clear of the house; and as she saw no cause for alarm a sigh of relief escaped her, a faint smile at her own cowardice flickered over her face.

'Heaven save the mark, sir, but she's not the house-breaker!' ejaculated Mr. Wheeler, loth he knew not why to seize that miserable object.

'But, I tell you, yes. I am responsible; so seize her at once.'

She came quietly to meet them, and they left their hiding-place. In an instant she comprehended that the terror of her life had come upon her: that the ruthless hand of the law was stretched out to drag her to a shameful trial, which could only end in a cruel sentence; a sentence that with all its ignominious details would ring in a thousand ears, while a thousand eyes glutted their love of the horrible, by gazing at her wretchedness. With an appalling shriek she recoiled. The hunted look deepened in its intense agony, the dogs were already showing their fangs. So laden with human pain was the cry she uttered, that Wheezy Wheeler paused a moment. Then professional instincts overcame all others, and he advanced, saying,

'I arrest you ——'

He did not finish the sentence. Desperation had taken possession of her, and she had turned swiftly and fled. Fled for her life, though she had no hope; only a vague terror behind goading her onward.

'Run, man, run!' shouted Mr. Bignoles, furiously. 'Run, or she'll escape us yet.'

Wheezy Wheeler was not a bad man nor an unfeeling man. He was not even a stern moralist. He could feel for a fellow-creature in distress, however much it might be deserved. But he had the love of a policeman, despite his load of flesh, and he could not see a culprit run, without his heels itching to be after him, his fingers

tingling to catch him. Obeying his instincts as well as his companion's commands, he started in pursuit, greatly to the admiration of the elderly clerk with the very large hooked nose and the dirty grey beard, who was of an asthmatic turn. Doubling on her pursuers at every conceivable corner, the girl ran wildly on, but they kept well in sight. Up the narrow squalid street, out into reeking byelanes, past rows of crazy tumbledown tenements, whose listless, half dead and alive inhabitants came to the doors, roused into a feeble life by the chase that passed like a flash; across meadows, over ditches, through bush and brake and briar, heedless of wounds and bruises, through mud and mire and thick brick clay, on she ran madly, caring nothing where she went, no object in view, only possessed by a wild unreasoning terror that seemed to lend her wings.

Good Heaven! how she runs. The ground flies from under her feet: hedges, ditches, walls, houses, gardens, trees, brick kilns, dash past in endless succession, in bewildering confusion. Her strength is failing, her head is giddy, her eyes grow blind; yet still she runs on, and still her pursuers follow.

'Oh, it's no use at all, at all, Mr. Bignose. I can't stir another step,' ejaculated Wheezy Wheeler piteously. 'Faix, it's big conscience ye ought to be called.'

'Ye go on!' shouted Mr. Bignoles hoarsely, 'or you don't get a farthing. Take her, and I'll double the fiver.'

'All right, Mr. Longnose; sure, it'll be a help to the wife and the childher, at any rate;' and the almost suffocated man started off again.

'How'll I ever get up that hill?' he ejaculated mentally, for he had no more strength to speak. 'If the road to

Heaven's like this, I don't wonder the cratures don't like to go too quick. More remarkably them that's something of my own shape, save the mark. But sure she can't hold out much longer ?'

Two boys are playing on the top of the hill. In mere sport they turn from their play to watch the hunted creature who comes toward them. If she can but mount that hill, she may hide on the other side. It was the first definite thought of escape that had flashed across her, and it added vigour to her flagging step. But a wild shout passes her by on the breeze.

'Stop the thief!'

She sees the boys approach her. She waves them back with a mute appeal for mercy that her parched lips cannot utter. With a sudden swerve she eludes their grasp, making for the side of the hill, where a huge brick pond extends, with steep, sharp banks, like the sides of a quarry. If she can only reach that. They will hardly follow her there.

'Keep her from the water; she is mad!' shouted the clerk, and a bricklayer rushes from the kiln to intercept the fugitive. Will he be in time? With a last effort, she redoubles her speed; the friendly water is so near, the slimy yellow pool that will be so cool and peaceful a bed, so thick a curtain between her misery and the eyes of a merciless crowd, an awful judge; so kindly an end to all her troubles.

On, on the unfortunate fat man is obliged to go, with only a second's stoppage now and then, during which the clerk, who has taken a diverse course, sends a volley of execrations across at him.

'Faix, I can't stand this much longer,' he groaned,

wiping the big drops of perspiration from his forehead, still panting on like a breathed elephant. 'And if I stop he'll cheat me, as sure as day. Such a run for a jade like that. If I only had her! It's an unprincipled creature she is to lead me such a race, and all for nothing.'

Indignation supplied him with a little more strength, and again he runs, in a direction that will bring him between the clerk and the labourer. They are close to her now, very close; she has had to double from the boys, and the labourer's hand almost touches her dress. Again she turns, eluding the man with incredible speed, and commences running in a straight line for the brick pond.

And the two boys for sport joined the chase, for mere sport helped to run the poor hunted creature down. Higher up on the hill than she was, they took a slanting direction toward the water. It was fine fun to circumvent the hapless runner; and they laughed in triumphant glee, as the excitement warmed their blood and tingled in their veins.


'Come on, Georgy, come on; we'll be down at the pond before her.'

'You run that side, I'll run this.'

They separated as they spoke, with a merry laugh. Their clear boyish voices floated past the fugitive as she still ran on, just as the wild mirth of her companions used to come ringing in her ears, in the old days of Jenny Joy. Gay voices seemed to sing the old refrain—

Jenny Joy's run away, run away.

The old pain is at the heart, only sharper, keener, as dream-like reality is sharper than realistic dreaming. A piercing shriek burst from her white lips, as the taller of the two boys bounds towards her and grasps her dress. He stood



still suddenly, like one transfixed, gazing at her rigid face, as his companion stood panting beside him.

'Oh, Georgy, let her go,' exclaimed the younger boy, with sudden remorse.

Willingly would Georgy do so if he could, but the delay is fatal.

A few wild, despairing bounds to that placid, dull, yellow pool; her pursuers are gaining at every step. Will she reach it? She stands on the brink..

The calm, cold waters invite her to rest—rest that should never be broken by a keen pain, never be disturbed by a fevered fear—to repose calm, unruffled even by the tiniest wavelet.

Only one step more—

Great Heavens! they touch her—they have caught her.

All is over. The dogs have brought the deer to bay.

. . . . .

'Not dead, sir?' whispered Georgy, awestruck, as he crept timidly near.

'Dunno; ought to be if she isn't,' Mr. Wheeler grumbled. 'Enough to kill a cat.'

And he was not a hard man, nor a bad man. No, nor a weak one, though a treacherous drop did intrude itself into his eye.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

## A GIRL OF THE PERIOD.

‘Is it not a pretty picture? Almost as good as a sonata, Herr?’

‘Yes, yes, it is very pretty,’ the Herr said. ‘I grant you it is one lovely sight; but it is not music; nein, nein.’

‘I thought you had eyes as well as ears,’ said Robert Dalzell, with his quiet, patient smile. The Herr hummed over an air from an opera he was preparing, beating time with his nervous, muscular fingers on the marble pillar of the balcony, until they were occupied in dotting down chords on a piece of paper he took from his pocket, with a fat stump of a lead pencil, while the painter gave himself up to the charm of the scene.

It was, as he had said, a very pretty picture. Sweeping away before him from the terrace to the fir belt was the lawn, stretching out at either side to the confines of the thickly wooded park. The smooth expanse of velvet sward was dotted with clumps of laurel, solitary oaks, gigantic cedars, magnificent queenly magnolias. No dainty patch of garden flowers marred the majestic woodland beauty of that lawn. A flower garden of surpassing loveliness was at another side, but here was naught but tree, and grass, and water, and wild anemones, and blue violets, nestling against mossy trunks, kissing and concealing gnarled roots.

A stately giant of the woods held solitary state not far from the terrace; no meaner shrub grew near, only daisies and cowslips and field azaleas paid court to this lonely

sovereign, only chattering songsters gave tribute to this king, and presumed to offer him companionship. Under the spreading branches sits Charlie Devereux, reading. Near him, half sitting, half reclining, is Miss Ingram. The burning sun shoots athwart the cumbersome boskage, seeking to see that which is thickly hidden from his gaze, only succeeding in catching tiny glimpses here and there of a golden head, and a mop of chestnut curls, on each of which he leaves a wee patch of golden sunlight. Miss Ingram's eyes are fixed on vacancy, yet with a dim consciousness of the beauty around; but her soul is in the magic words, the wondrous thoughts of the poet, whose interpreter Charlie Devereux has become.

'Oh, Mr. Dalzell, Herr Joaquin,' she exclaimed, as the two artists strolled near. 'Come, come and listen; I want you to hear this with me.'

The grey-haired painter and the beetle-browed musician paused in obedience to the sweetly imperious voice of this spoiled child of fortune. They listened while the deep rich voice rolled out the beautiful words that an angel might have dreamed.

'There is word music for you, Herr, and grand painting for you, Mr. Dalzell,' said the girl, looking up with her eyes full, oh, so full of enjoyment, brimming over with a gladness that made itself felt.

'It is very goot, no doubt,' and the short portly musician nodded his ponderous head with a sort of contemptuous approval, 'but to call it music? Ah! non, non,' and he passed his big corded hand across his forehead, flinging back the great black locks of hair, that at times gave him a truly villainous look, concealing as they did the wide, big-thoughted brow.

'You can enjoy it,' Miss Ingram said impatiently, turning to Robert Dalzell.

'Yes,' he said, simply, 'I cannot help it ; it appeals to my soul, ay, and to my artistic senses as well, for is it not a wonderful word picture ?'

'My lord wishes to speak to you, sir,' a servant said, addressing Charlie.

The young man put down the book to obey the unusual summons. Herr Joaquin accompanied him to the house, and the painter and Miss Ingram sat under the big tree. Neither spoke for a time, but sat quietly enjoying the babble of the brook, the twitter of the birds, the echo of the poet's genius. Then Flossy looked up, speaking gently and thoughtfully, as she generally did to Robert Dalzell.

'Do you know, Mr. Dalzell, I am getting very discontented ?'

'Why ?'

'I am so useless. I am nothing, you know—I mean I do nothing. I am neither a painter, nor a musician, nor a sculptor, nor a writer, and yet I enjoy everything pertaining to those callings ; appreciate them so keenly, in fact, that I could never be satisfied with my meagre contributions, my powerless pictures, my soulless music, my imperfectly expressed thoughts. They would only drive me wild with vexation, I am sure. Why is it that Providence has given me no gift ? I have no place in the world that I enjoy so much.'

'No gift ? When the gift of appreciation is so strong upon you ? Do not be discontented, my dear young lady. You have that which many men of fame and genius have not.'

'But people won't give me credit for this spirit of appreciation. They won't allow me to sympathise with them, because I do nothing in their particular line. Herr Joaquin will not permit me to worship at the same shrine as himself, because I do not place on the altar the same offerings.'

'But do you know that more happiness is allotted to you than to that concentrated genius? You have just sufficient knowledge of art to enjoy to the full the glory of this sylvan picture, but not enough to make you feel that it cannot satisfy you until it is transferred to canvas. You can drink in all the sweetness of a symphony, without an innate conviction that you can never cease striving till you have produced something as grand. All nature is open to you without hindrance or alloy; all art contributes to your gratification without requiring anything in return. Why, then, should you quarrel with your organisation?'

'No no, that is not it, Mr. Dalzell. I am not ambitious, nor am I ungrateful. But I am sometimes troubled with this doubt: What right have I, who give nothing, to enjoy everything?'

'The right of the power to do so. You have a great gift, I tell you.'

'Ah! but it is such a selfish one. And though I am not ambitious, I do not *always* like being set down for a fool, a shallow, superficial school-girl, and I do sometimes wish to be useful in some way.'

'Are we then only to credit with intellect those who paint a picture, or write a book, or compose a sonata? Does that man or woman who has only the charm of being transcendently companionable, who has only the power of entering into and sympathising in the highest sense with

the thoughts and aspirations of others, rank lowest in the scale? For whom then should we paint pictures or write books? Assuredly not for our fellow artists. Must it then be for the fools?’

‘You comfort me, Mr. Dalzell;’ and then the sunny laugh rippled out under the great beech tree, and Miss Ingram flung abstract questions to the winds, and when Rohan Blennerhasset crossed the lawn, having left his horse at the stables, he found only the gay madcap, bent on charming everyone within her magic circle, even that quiet man with the noble brow and the hair more grey than brown. By-and-by the sun, finding it impossible to penetrate thoroughly the thick foliage, crept round to the library to see what was going on there, for the heavy curtains were drawn back, and a sound of voices issued from the open windows. The face of the Sphinx, supremely calm, sublimely moveless, yet instinct with the life of a wondrous conception, that looked down with such indifference on those low luxurious bergères, and fauteuils, and buhl tables, and ebony cabinets, looked down now with as little interest on the haughty form of a man whose age and whose suffering had not taught him to submit to contradiction; on a fair young girl with golden hair falling not in curls but in masses over the slender shoulders, with red lips, pouting now, with a rose gleam on her cheek, and brilliant, mirthful, mischievous eyes; on a handsome curly-haired young man standing opposite, with as daring a look in the hazel eyes as ever a Ptolemy wore when he laughed in the face of the grim death hung up in his banquetting hall.

‘I have explained the matter as far as I can, my lord,’ he said in his happy, buoyant, boyish way. ‘Flossy and I settled it long ago.’

'Indeed? Permit me to thank yourself and Miss Ingram for the consideration.'

'No, don't, uncle,' Flossy interrupted irreverently. 'How could I come and tell you I wasn't going to get married, when you never thought it worth your while to mention the matter to me?'

'Are you going to lecture me on my duty, Miss Ingram?'

'Good gracious! no, uncle; I couldn't lecture even if I tried, though I've no doubt you would prove a highly suggestive subject. But you surely did not expect me to take the initiative in such a matter? It would have been highly indelicate.'

'Have you descended to equivocation, Miss Ingram? Are you going to assert that my wishes, the joint plans of the heads of two noble families, were unknown to you?'

'Dear me, no. Of course I knew all about them; and it was just because they made me so uncomfortable, and things in general so awkward, that Charlie and I had a grand clearing up. You have no idea how delightfully things have gone since then.'

'That will do; I have heard enough.' He waved them away with an impatient gesture; he wanted to be alone to realise this incomprehensible, unheard-of audacity.

'My dear child, is it possible it is come to this?' exclaimed Mrs. Chirrup in dismay, as the two unabashed criminals stood before her, giving her an outline of the interview.

'Come to this?' Miss Ingram exclaimed. 'Now for a darling little fairy godmother, as you are, you are very obtuse. You don't mean to say you thought Charlie and I were going to get married?'

'I don't see what else I should have thought ; but of course it doesn't matter.'

'Indeed, but it does matter,' Flossy retorted. 'You will allow me to remark that you take the giving up of me very coolly. Don't you think, if I were going to be married, I would make a little more fuss about it?'

'Don't be frivolous ——'

'It's you that are frivolous, my dear, to take so serious a matter so lightly.'

'One doesn't get married every day, you know, auntie,' Charlie added sagely, bending his bright, handsome, boyish face to hers. 'But don't blame me, you know,' and he caressed the little white hands coaxingly, for dear little aunt was a particular pet of handsome Charlie's. 'It's all that Flossy. She wouldn't have me at any price. Fact, I assure you. I went down on my bended knees ——'

'To beg me to refuse him. Fact, I assure you,' Flossy interrupted with immovable seriousness. 'I didn't like promising at first, knowing the grave interests that were at stake. I set before him the facts of the case, the shocking disappointment it would be to Grand Llama. I reasoned with him gravely, and I may say, though I say it that should not, eloquently, but all in vain. His heart was stone, and I was obliged to give in.'

Which of them is at fault? queried Mrs. Chirrup, scanning the mischievous faces before her. Surely she had not been mistaken all those years. There was, there must be love between them, but on whose side was it?

'Upon my word, Miss Ingram, I am shocked at you,' Charlie said, lifting his hands in horrified surprise. 'But you know better than to believe such an unprincipled young person. Don't you, aunt?'

'You know that I was the very essence of goodness till that Charlie came here, and that evil communications corrupt good manners; don't you, godmother?'

'I'm really beginning to think you're one as bad as the other. There's not a choice between you, I do declare,' Mrs. Chirrup said, with a good deal of energy. 'But what *did* your uncle say?'

'I don't know what he said; it wasn't much I think, but I know how he looked.'

'And he can look,' Charlie remarked. 'If I could only acquire the art of looking like that, I should live like a prince, or like Larry M'Hale. I don't think the bravest dun would have the courage to face me, and if he found himself accidentally in the dread presence, his bill would change into an humble whine for more custom. Let me practise, aunt; lend me your spectacles.'

'Can you not be serious, you tiresome boy?'

'As if I ever was otherwise,' Charlie said, with an aggrieved look.

'What will your uncle say? It'll all come on me, I feel sure.'

'It doesn't matter in the least what he says,' snapped Flossy irreverently. 'Nasty old frump. He ought to have been a three-tailed pasha instead of an Irish gentleman.'

'Flossy!'

'Well, I won't; there. Only if he teases or bothers you about it —'

'We'll all three elope,' Charlie said, 'and go hand in hand to seek our fortunes in the great world, and our half souls as well, only I am afraid to get yours we should have to go to fairy-land.'



'No, my dear, only to Heaven,' and the brilliant hazel eyes were dimmed with a moisture that brought the tender womanly shadows to the face of the wilful, careless girl, and made Charlie stoop, almost reverently, to kiss the soft smooth brow on which the beautiful grey hair lay so placidly.

'Not going to marry Mr. Devereux, after all?' said one of the members of the scandal meeting that assembled once a week at Miss Grinigan's house. 'Ah, well, flirts must expect what they get. It's a just judgment.'

'Yes, it's a just judgment,' the doctor's wife said. 'Between two stools you know ——' and the nod said much more than the words. 'It's barely right that it should be so, to my mind. Now that Mr. Devereux has opened his eyes, Harry Dillon hardly goes there at all.'

'Well, really, it's time such scandalous doings were put an end to. I never heard of such doings at Ingram till that girl came here, with her ugly little face and hair as if it had never known a comb. It was bad enough then, with her flying about on her pony by herself like mad, but now she's never content unless she's two or three young men flying too, and it's simply disgusting.'

'Well, really, I don't see anything wrong in riding,' remarked Florence O'Flaherty, a deluded young woman, who had come there with the preposterous idea that she was going to sew garments for the poor, and found instead that she must pick holes in others as fast as possible, if she would be 'one of them.' 'If it was wrong to ride alone, I suppose she found it out, and tries to secure company now, to make amends. As to being ugly—the gentlemen don't say so, I assure you.'

'The gentlemen are fools,' said the lawyer's helpmate.

‘Of course I defer to your practical experience,’ Florence said politely; ‘but you must allow there are exceptions. My cousin Fred is a very sensible young man, though a barrister. He met Miss Ingram once, and he couldn’t tell a single feature in her face, but he raved about her till his holidays were over.’

‘And that’s all he did do, I imagine,’ broke in Miss Grinigan contemptuously. ‘To smile and chat for an hour to her, to rave, as you say, for a couple more, and then to forget her; that’s about the extent of what flirts get.’

‘Possibly,’ Florence said mischievously; ‘but then as it’s so much more than other people get, I don’t see they have much cause to complain; and for all the gentlemen say, just see how they appreciate flirts.’

Certainly that young woman’s cognomen should have been Gall and Wormwood, instead of the fine old Irish name it was.

‘Not going to marry Charlie Devereux!’ exclaimed Rohan Blennerhasset. ‘She is a jilt as well as a flirt—as heartless as vain. What shallow, superficial butterflies are these girls of the period!’ and he ground his heel on the smooth white terrace, as though the girls of the period had done him some grievous wrong.

‘They covet every heart that comes to minister to their vanity, only that they may have the pleasure of flinging it back again. Were I to give that girl the love of my life, she would only throw it aside for the next new toy.’

The logical deduction from which sensible speech being that he would not give that girl the love of his life.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

## WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING.

ALL the gentlemen, with the exception of the eminent lawyer and his host, were out shooting. Constance Bouverie was deep in a novel and refused to stir, so Flossy ordered her Arab round and ran to dress herself for a ride, not in the least troubled that it was to be *à la mode* the school-days, before Lord Ingram had inspired Mrs. Chirrup with a wholesome fidgetiness as to the bringing up of the future baroness.

Down she came like a whirlwind, almost on top of Mr. Blennerhasset.

‘Going out, Miss Ingram?’

‘Oh, yes;’ and the long lashes drooped, half shyly. It was a habit she had, or rather a trick of nature, for she had peeped out from under her lids at pretty boys when she was a plump five-year-old. ‘I couldn’t lose such a lovely day.’

‘Who can it be that is so impolite as to keep you waiting?’

‘Nobody; I am going alone.’

‘To ride by yourself?’

‘Why not? It wouldn’t be in the least astonishing to anybody if I set out in a walking-dress to trudge through mire, but if I set off in a habit, comfortably elevated out of mud and dusty roads, it is quite shocking;’ and as she spoke she mounted, allowing the groom to assist her, Mr. Blennerhasset having stopped short in his surprise. Then

she sat looking saucily down at him, as though to say, 'If you don't choose to help me, I can mount without.'

'You mustn't go alone. Permit me to accompany you.'

'With pleasure; a canter this breezy day will do you good.'

So it came that Mr. Blennerhasset went riding with Miss Ingram. But then you see it was the only way to save her from committing an indiscretion, so don't set down inconsistency in the list of Rohan Blennerhasset's faults.

'Good gracious!' said Mrs. Chirrup, as she caught sight of the pair riding away. 'What can she mean? Charlie Devereux and Harry Dillon were bad enough, but surely the girl cannot be thinking of trying her hand at flirting with Rohan Blennerhasset?'

Mr. Blennerhasset was going away, and Flossy the flirt sat before the oval mirror, the two dimpled elbows on the table, the two tiny hands under the pointed chin. Round her fell the golden hair, dim and dusk in the dull light, but soft and beautiful.

Going away; well, what of that? So many had come and gone lately at Rosehill, that the heiress had come to look upon welcoming and bidding adieu as her normal state of existence. Why could she not so regard it? Why should the going of a man who was indifferent to her trouble her even for a moment?

But was he indifferent, this proud, haughty man, who dictated rules of etiquette to duchesses, and contradicted Royal highnesses when they misquoted. If he was, why the long rides of the last few days, the thousand nameless attentions that had never been given before, the lowered tone, the resting glance? But if not, why was that face,

shining out dimly from the dark surface, powerless to detain him, powerless to extract from him a sign ?

‘He loves beauty, and I am not beautiful ; he worships truth and nobleness, and I am poor, and silly, and ignoble, and weak ; he requires stupendous intellect to meet his, even partially and I am a superficial school-girl. How, then, should he care for me ?’

A deep, quiet sigh ended the soliloquy ; then she lighted the other candles and summoned Cerise.

‘Cerise, make me look very nice—at least, as nice as you can.’

‘If mademoiselle will only be good enough to keep that colour. Ah ! but it is divine.’

The brush passed softly over the silky hair, and all the time a conviction shot athwart that unspoken soliloquy.

‘He does care to be near me ; I don’t know why, but I feel it. I may not be able to keep this liking, but at least I have it now.’

‘Ah ! the colour grows more beautiful,’ Cerise exclaimed, with a sigh of satisfaction. ‘Mademoiselle pleases me *parfaitement*.’

Mademoiselle pleased some one else when she swept in her girlish beauty, and almost unconscious coquetry, through the drawing-room, pausing in her corner.

‘Would he come to her ?’

Yes, he would and did, and offered his arm to take her down to dinner, although my Lady Woodenhead was the lady of highest rank there, and her daughter the next. And what was more, he was content to bend over her chair, talking nonsense ; he whose utterances decided the fate of a nation and the existence of a tax, grew glib and eloquent in drawing-room nothings.

Not nonsense, not nothings, always ; those things that bind up the glamour and poetry of a life. Not nonsense, not nothings, to Miss Ingram, whose whole soul looked out of her listening eyes. Her colour deepened, her eyes flashed, till her beauty stood out as a thing positive and distinct, not subjective or dependent on the mood of the beholder, and Rohan Blennerhasset was fairly bewitched. Brilliant repartee succeeded the nonsense that wasn't all nonsense ; gay exchanges of wit, in which counters were not allowed to pass as current coin, but were mercilessly hacked to pieces and flung aside.

At dinner George Clinton sat at the other side of Miss Ingram, and shared in the good things going. He was rather pleased at the treat, for his other neighbour was a fishy-eyed young woman, albeit she was the eldest daughter of the Earl of Woodenhead ; a well-bred young lady, who said 'yes' and 'no' at the proper moments, and said 'very nice,' as a variation to 'indeed.' Opposite was languid Constance Bouverie, who was not fishy-eyed despite her languor, but who did not consider Harry Dillon's claims to eligibility sufficiently important to interfere with her apathy. Lower down near the frigid Countess was a fast young lady, whose name had somehow crept into Mrs. Chirrup's list of invitations, a young lady who talked herself red in the face, and bawled at her neighbour as if he were deaf. Beyond that nothing particular could be laid to her charge ; but yet the fact remained that she was fast, and that everything she did and said was of that nature. It seemed as though some subtle influence emanated from her being, and coloured in her what was colourless in others.

A political debate had few charms for George Clinton,

and he followed the ladies almost immediately, accompanied by Charlie Devereux, gay, debonnaire as ever, under the great big shadow of his uncle's wrath. The two gentlemen effected a revolution in the drawing-room. Sleepy eyes grew bright; one young lady kindly drowned the conversation by a wonderful composition of Thalberg's, which she told them afterwards was 'Home, sweet Home.' Charlie Devereux tried his hand at teasing the Earl's daughter out of her stiff propriety, but, finding it a hopeless task, devoted himself to improving Miss Howard. The dowagers were still grouped together; and George Clinton talked poetry, literature, travels, art, people, to Miss Ingram. George Clinton talked all these well, but people best of all. He knew everybody, and he had just enough cynicism to be spicy.

He was in the midst of a graphic humorous account of his journey across the desert, when Rohan Blennerhasset came in. Miss Ingram looked quickly towards him to see if he were coming. He glanced at her and her companion, passed them, and sat down at the other end of the room. The angry blood rushed through the girl's veins like fire.

'Does he imagine that I am going to mope the best part of the evening for the sake of a few minutes' conversation with him?'

If he had been foolish enough to imagine anything of the kind, he must have owned to have made a grand mistake. Never was Miss Ingram more bewitchingly brilliant, more provokingly pretty, more defiantly happy.

'I have no power to move her; what a fool I was to think I had,' Rohan Blennerhasset murmured, as he turned away, and pushed aside the curtains to study the

stars. 'Not only frivolous, but heartless, incapable of any higher pleasure than that of the butterfly.'

'What a horrid-tempered creature I am !' Flossy muttered to herself, looking askant at the window. 'If he would speak !' and all the time gay sallies were being hurled at her by each one of the little circle that had gathered round, and she was obliged to take them up and throw them back. By-and-by the good fit passed away, and resentment filled her mind. 'He gives me nothing—nothing, and he expects that I will give everything. But I won't; and what is more, I shall let him see I can do without what I cannot get. I am not altogether the spoilt baby to keep crying for what is held beyond my reach.'

The groups broke up at last, and Mr. Blennerhasset approached Miss Ingram for the first time since dinner.

'This is the last night I shall spend at Rosehill, for some time at least. Will you favour me with that old ballad again ? That is, unless you are fatigued.'

'I am not easily tired when the exertion is a pleasure,' she said coldly. The coldness vanished, a coquettish smile rippled over the childish face, as George Clinton hurried back to her side.

'Miss Ingram, may I request "Love's request" ?'

'With pleasure;' and she took his arm to go to the piano. The operatic air was sung without a quiver in the clear, pure voice. It died away; a few chords echoed softly; then a sweet, low melody floated through the room. That too died away, and Flossy rose from the instrument.

'Thank you, Miss Ingram. I thought you had forgotten me.'

She looked up with the old shy look, but did not speak. She wished to do so, but something held her back—pride



or temper, she could not tell which. In the proud reserve of the woman who had felt herself aggrieved, he saw only the whim of the coquette, the caprice that gave smiles and frowns according to fancy.

Again he stood by the window watching the stars, and Flossy watched his troubled face with a dreary humiliation, dashed queerly enough with a feeling of exultation.

‘He does care about me,’ she thought sadly; ‘but he sees that I am not worthy to bear his name. I was not content with letting him see my frivolity; I must also show that I am obstinate and pig-headed.’

He went away the next day, and as the firm, strong hand clasped hers for a moment, she knew that the man’s heart looked out from the troubled eyes, but she knew also that he would not ask her to be his wife. She knew that she had been weighed and found wanting.

The strangely cold, sweet smile with which she had uttered her careless *au revoir*, faded away almost into a loathing indifference as Mr. Clinton addressed her with his gay raillery. She muttered something about her god-mother wanting her, and rushed upstairs to her own room, locking herself in.

‘Why, why was I not made good and clever?’ she demanded passionately; ‘or else formed to be content with the favour of such as do not require those qualities in a woman? I wanted that man’s friendship and liking, but I had not the courage to give up all the little pleasures of my life for the mere chance of it. I was not noble or great enough to be capable of that; I was petty and paltry. Why, then, cannot I be content with being paltry, without aspiring after higher things?’

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## CHAPTER XX.

## DRINKING DEEPER.

No wonder she should be a butterfly in such a butterfly existence. Riding, boating, playing croquet on the lawn, charming every gentleman who came across her path in a manner perfectly distracting to handsome girls, alluring as if by some subtle spell men of intellect to talk to her, and pet her, and spoil her, and defer to her whimsical ideas, in a way that drove clever and accomplished women crazy with disgust and envy, and not a little confusion at the incomprehensibility of the thing. And now was to come the crowning joy of all—she was to be presented at the sham Court, and to enjoy a season in Dublin, when Dublin was the wittiest capital in Europe; to have the freedom of a society that boasted the greatest refinement, combined with an ease and social liberty not to be met with in conjunction elsewhere: a society in which the very rarest and richest triumphs of intellect were scattered with the lavish profusion characteristic of the nation: a society which offered both stimulant and satisfaction to the very highest desires of its members.

Life was very bright to the young girl. True, Blennerhasset had measured her by his high standard of female excellence, and had found her come short of it; true, too, that his opinion was of great importance to the seemingly careless girl. But the opportunity was still before her to improve; Rohan Blennerhasset was still open to be won.


It was a very brilliant season. A new Lord-Lieutenant was come, and he was about to inaugurate his reign by a



series of festivities that should completely dazzle such of the Irish as it was not needful to exterminate.

Do people who talk about the emptiness of the pleasures of the world, ever think of what it is to a highly-gifted young girl, nobly born and richly endowed, to enter for the first time into society, to mingle freely with those whose names have been household words in her quiet home ; men and women whose genius was a thing for the great world of rank and fashion and wealth to bow down to, and to humour, to serve, to minister to ? Such as cannot comprehend the pleasures, are capable of prating about fools of fashion and empty-headed weathercocks ; but I maintain that of all enjoyments under the category of earthly, there is none to equal the intoxicating delight of an interchange of sentiments, serious, droll, grand, or ludicrous, between minds of a high order. It was delicious, bewildering, enchanting, that first rich draught from life's cup of nectar. No wonder that the girl should drink deeply, no wonder that her brain should whirl, her head throb.

Queen of the revels was Miss Ingram, Baroness to be ; and in her mimic court she numbered the noblest of the land, as well as the moustached and perfumed inanities who allowed that 'that girl could waltz with a fellah,' and the needier but equally well-dressed and well-bred snobs, who appreciated her superb dowry and high rank. The most rigidly exclusive coteries were open to Lord Ingram's heiress ; courtly old gentlemen and stiffly correct old ladies, who would have closed their *salons* for ever to a mere heiress, or a fast young beauty, permitted her to enter, and having done that had nothing for it but to submit to be captivated.



Was Miss Ingram spoiled by all this adulation? Scarcely. Careless, frolicsome, childish as she was, she had a marvellously just conception of her admirers' claims to consideration; a method of classifying them in her own mind, that Rohan Blennerhasset would never have given such a well-dressed belle credit for, that would have been no disgrace to many a cleverer woman. With an instinct that was like inspiration, she knew exactly how much of all this grateful incense was due to her powers of amusing, her flirting propensities, her rank, her purse, and how much to herself, and she knew the exact proportion to credit each one with. But do not imagine that this keen perception troubled her. She accepted what each one was willing to give without asking what they did not offer, what, perhaps, they were not capable of giving. She exchanged merry repartee and sparkling rejoinders with people whom she knew would never have discovered her intellect had it not been backed by her gold. Nor was her amusement the less keen from the fact that it was furnished by people who would not bestow a glance or thought on her were her lot cast in a humbler sphere.

After all, which is the wisest—the scowling cynic who refuses *bon camaraderie* offered in all good faith because it does not conceal something deeper, who rails at those who proffer passing courtesy because they do not give their warmest friendship to people who would be very much bored at the idea of having to give anything of the sort in return; or this young lady, who took the world as she found it, and was content to repay pleasant attention, and superficial but decidedly agreeable geniality in kind, without asking for more? Which displayed the truest philosophy?

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE HEIRESS OF INGRAM.

ALL her life had been misery and wretchedness, all her days had been clouded by the sin of others, and at last had come the dreaded evil, the terrible end, that she knew must come, sooner or later.

Now that the smallest chance of a struggle was over, a strange calm had come over the vagrant from the Thieves' Latin. It was a calm, not of peace, but of listless apathy. Almost without fear she watched the days go by, and wondered in a dull, dreamy sort of way whether they would hang her, or only transport her. To be hanged! To have Heaven's grandest gift strangled out of her by the hangman, before a gazing throng of pitiless, curious eyes—her blood curdled, and yet it would be sooner over.

Sooner over? Yes, that was all she looked forward to, if she looked forward at all—to have it all over. Her life had been so very wretched always, always. She had never known any pleasure; and it would be so well to be at rest, where no one would ever chase her again.

The day had come, the assizes were already commenced, and her case stood second on the list.

Perfectly still, not even now roused from the stupor that had come upon her, she stood in the court-room till she was summoned. Then she went in, wondering queerly why she was not afraid of the gaping eyes, the buzzing voices, the stern frowns of the righteous of the earth; wondering why it was that she did not seem to hear or to heed anything.

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Such a poor, pinched, pale face ; such a weak, wasted-looking form ; not a bit like a sturdy burglar, still less like one of the flash females of the swell mob, with the untidy brown hair twisted back, and the ragged gown, ragged in spite of many a rent sewn up. Murmurs of surprise and incredulity went through the court that that miserable girl should be capable of such a daring theft. Carelessly, haughtily sweeping over the faces of the throng, Lord Ingram's glance passed his niece, where she sat surrounded by her tiny court, not listening to their blandishments that seemed to jar and revolt her in this place, but looking pityingly at the child criminal with the old worn woman's face, passed the well-dressed crowd, the learned lawyers, and rested on the prisoner. The eyes of the vagrant looked into those of the peer, and there was a something in the pale, wistful face that stirred up in Lord Ingram vague recollections of having seen it before. Those sad eyes, riveted on his with a curious, earnest scrutiny, troubled him with their mournful intentness, and involuntarily he continued gazing.

To her there were no vague recollections. Every circumstance, even of that meeting by the river-side, was stamped indelibly on her memory. Clearly as if it had occurred that morning came the remembrance of her strange unaccountable yearning for she knew not what, her vague desire to speak even a word to the stranger who glanced over her with such haughty indifference. Now as then, now as when she watched from behind the laurels, came the inexpressible longing to know something, to do something ; but what the something was she was unable to tell.

With a novel interest Lord Ingram listened for the girl's answer when she was asked what she would plead.

There was a pause of a few seconds; then it came. A thrill almost like a shiver passed through the judge's frame, as the childish voice rang out, clear and shrill,

'Guilty!'

Guilty! Yes, of course she was guilty. Was not the very look of her enough to condemn her before any decent jury, with her tatterdemalion clothes and poverty-stricken face, and miserable, hopeless, hapless look, that said as plain as plain could be, 'All my life has been wretchedness?' What need to enquire further?


There was no need for the wonderfully sharp cross-examination prepared by Mr. Clincher for the confounding of this hardened criminal; no need for the incontrovertible evidence that Rohan Blennerhasset for the first time felt loth to give. He was somehow troubled by the unconscious reproach of the girl's wretchedness. It suddenly seemed to him such a bitter satire on common sense, this eloquent speech of the counsel for the prosecution, showing the depravity of this girl, who had had the chance of earning an honest livelihood with a kind, confiding mistress, who might have been honest and would not. A harsh, mocking laugh rang through the crowded court-house at the words—a laugh that made the blood curdle with its malignant meaning; but none could tell whence it came.

'Have you anything to say why I should not pass sentence upon you.'

She looked up, wondering why he should ask her that, then shook her head slowly.

'Nothing to say why I should not sentence you to transportation?'

All the eager, curious, prying eyes, all the portentous big-wigged, long-robed barristers faded from her view.



She only saw the thin haughty face, the keen blue eyes—not so blue just now—and, mentally ignoring the judicial wig, the iron-grey locks that the river breeze had fanned a year ago.

‘No, sir; only I’m very glad it’s all over.’

‘Have you no regret to express for what you have done?’

‘N—o.’

‘Why didn’t you try to lead an honest life?’

‘I couldn’t, it was no use; Jenny could, but I couldn’t. I was no good.’

She spoke in a tone of abject humiliation, yet not of penitence.

‘Would you be honest now if anyone were to try you?’

She shook her head slowly, hopelessly.

‘No.’

‘No! Don’t you think it is very wicked to steal?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘You did not commit that theft from yourself?’

She was silent.

‘You are very young. Name your confederates; point out those who made you their tool; and what mercy may be shown I will show.’

She could have cleared herself. She could have accused her father, and proved his guilt. She could have directed the officers of the law to his lair, where a part of the booty yet remained. She could have shown them the Jew to whom the other portion had been sold. She could do this, but would she?

She clasped her thin, weak hands tightly together, and her lips moved.



'Jenny wouldn't tell, never. I won't.'

'What do you say?'

Again came the slow shake of the head.

'But you can save yourself. Think of seven years' hard labour.'

No, she would not think of it. Ignorant, untaught as she was, she would cling to this one grand idea. She had not courage to do as Jenny did, but she would suffer as Jenny might suffer. Jenny never could turn informer to save her life, and in that she would follow in Jenny's footsteps.

'I won't tell. Jenny wouldn't.'

'Who is Jenny?'

'She ran away to be honest. You see, she was brave, and Oh, so good; but I was no good.'

A man was pressing forward from the body of the hall, and Lord Ingram watched him fixedly, while he shoved careless persons out of the way and cowed bullies with a superior insolence, and elbowed officers with an air of business-like coolness that defied any violent interruption, and by sheer force of audacity made his way to the witness-box in less time than it would have taken another to think about it.

He was a tall grizzled man, with a coarse frieze coat, that would have been respectable on anybody else. Tangled matted hair was pushed back from a high forehead, seamed and wrinkled, and two coal-black eyes burnt with unholy light in their hollow sockets.


'You ask her why she stole, my lord, and why she will not be honest. I tell you it is no more possible for her to reform than for her to become an angel. She had a

chance to be honest, did you say, sir?'—and he turned his derisive gaze on the learned counsel—'Sure, she had, a fine one. She was sent to live for the first time in her life with people who hadn't to prey openly on one another to make a living, with all the habits and necessities of her former life strong upon her. She, a thief by profession from her childhood, bred the daughter of a thief, went straight out of the squalor of the Thieves' Latin to become honest. And you wonder that the excellent plan failed, that this thief of years and education did not fling off by some sudden magic her very nature, her second self. O, sir, and my lord, she had a very good chance, had she not? But I tell you you might give her fifty such chances and she would not profit by them. I tell you that this girl has been brought up a thief; I tell you there is no hope for her, and she cannot help herself. She could not be honest if she would, she would not if she could.'

'Is that all you have come to say?' demanded the judge, leaning forward. 'Have you no evidence to give that may help your daughter?'

'*My daughter!*' and the ringing voice of the tramp awakened every echo of the vast building. 'No, my lord, I have not come to talk about my daughter. She only stole once; only once, as I am a living man, and that was to help a comrade out of trouble; but that was eleven years ago, and she is with the damned now, whether in this world or the other; for she was a convict's daughter, and the argument ran that she had bad blood in her and couldn't be good. But I did not come to speak of my daughter, but of yours, Lord Ingram.'

A stupor came over the judge, but his glazed eyes never flitted from his persecutor. There was a death-like silence




then the voice of the tramp rang out again, clear, distinct as the voice of a fate.

‘Yes, look all of you, and look well, for you don’t see such a sight every day. That girl, well known to the police, proved guilty of robbing the credulous lady who trusted her, is Kate, only child of Ralph, Lord Ingram, of Ingram Place. Kate Ingram, Baroness that is to be. She is only fourteen, and she confesses to a crime that would not disgrace an old hand. The heiress of Ingram will be of age when her term of transportation is ended.’

Horror, agony, fear, struggled in the countenance of the nobleman. With an abhorrent glance he put his hand to his eyes.

‘It is false,’ he said hoarsely; ‘that girl is not my daughter.’

‘I always make my word good,’ said the tramp with a sternly significant smile. ‘If I could not have proved that yon offscouring of the Thieves’ Latin were your daughter, would I have hunted her down as I have done? I can show the clothes she wore when she was missing; I can show the crop of golden curls shorn from her head; ay, and I can give better proof than that when the time comes. It wasn’t only for my own benefit that I made the experiment that has been so successful. I wanted you, my lord, to learn the galling truth that it isn’t in the blood always, that your daughter, when properly trained and tempted, makes as handy a shoplifter, as incorrigible a criminal, as mine would have made if I hadn’t put her up, like an idol, out of harm’s way. Her tongue is as glib at a lie as if she was the child of a tramp instead of a lord, and she will profit by seven years at the convict station equally well. I promise you that.’



There were no more cases that day; the judge had fallen back rigid and senseless. Once the prisoner attempted to speak, but a single glance from the lurid eyes stopped her. After that she made no sign, but stood with her head bent, her hands folded; only a pitiful longing to comfort that poor old man, who was so stricken with shame, disturbing her apathetic indifference.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

## NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN.

‘It’s all a trick, depend upon it, Flossy; it’s all a trick.’

Miss Ingram looked up at Charlie Devereux, who bent over to remove any little uneasiness she might feel.

‘Do you think so, Charlie?’ she said very quietly, scarcely interrogatively.

‘I don’t think anything at all about it. It’s a ridiculous imposture that no one could give credence to for a moment.’

She made no answer, except to assent when Charlie proposed that they should sit still until the crush had cleared away. She sat very still, looking intensely down at the dock, where crouched and cowered that ragged girl. Though her face was without the rose gleam her gaze was calm and steadfast, yet her ears were dull and deaf to the buzz going on around her. Mr. Clinton and Harry Dillon and Charlie formed a knot, and raised a great noise, that could not be called a discussion, since it consisted al-

together of denunciations of the bare-faced effrontery of that ill-looking man. She did not hear them, though it was all for her express benefit, until Mr. Clinton appealed more immediately to her.

‘Why I declare, Devereux, if here is not La Petite Reine looking as serious as if she were going to be dethroned. Permit me to assure your small majesty that there is no fear of this usurper gaining a footing; if even she could by any impossible possibility do that, we could never transfer our allegiance, we could never acknowledge any sovereign but “the queen Rose of the Rosebuds.”’

‘No, Mr. Clinton?’ and she smiled up at him, only still with that unusual quiet. ‘I shall not contradict you, because it would not be polite, but my opinions incline to the time-honoured custom, “Le Roi est mort, vive Le Roi.”’

‘Ah, with the coarser sex.’

‘Believe me, La Reine seldom fares better than Le Roi.’

‘Don’t you believe in chivalry?’

‘When you are present, certainly.’

‘What an improving effect I have on your morals. But really, Miss Ingram, you look quite serious. You do not for a moment imagine that that absurd story is true? You could not possibly let it annoy you, even for a moment?’

‘Annoy me? Why should it annoy me?’ she said, looking up searchingly with those shining eyes. ‘Even suppose it to be true, should I not still be Beatrice Ingram? Should I not still preserve intact the revered memory of my parents, should I not still possess my name, and, above all, myself? Would not my intrinsic value be precisely the same as when I was the heiress of Ingram?’

'When you were!' interrupted Charlie impetuously. 'There is no were or was about the thing. I won't have you talk so. Look here, Blennerhasset, did you ever see such a ridiculous girl?'

'Oh, it's no use asking Mr. Blennerhasset,' she said lightly, as she discovered that Mr. Blennerhasset had joined the group. 'He thinks all girls equally ridiculous; and they are too insignificant a part of creation to demand the exercise of discrimination.'

Her tone of levity puzzled and jarred upon Blennerhasset, and he knitted his brows ominously.

'It's too bad, isn't it?' Harry Dillon said indignantly. 'That fellow ought to be well punished. And he will be, I suppose; won't he?'

'I don't know.'

'Well, I know,' said Charlie; 'for I mean to give him a splendid thrashing.'

'You will have to find him first, though,' Mr. Blennerhasset said.

'Why should you talk like that, Charlie? If the man speaks truth, he has as much right to talk as you or I. You surely would not thrash him because he's poor.'

'No, little cousin, only for insolence.'

'Leave him to the law,' said Rohan Blennerhasset.

'I think we might venture down now, Charlie,' Miss Ingram said, rising, and smiling her thanks to Harry Dillon as he hurried to see if the carriage was there. Then she cast a parting glance at that shivering, ill-clad figure, and shivered herself. Instead of gay answers to Mr. Clinton's raillery she would fain have said, 'Poor thing, how miserable her life must have been!' but she repressed the inclination, and by the time they had got downstairs

Mr. Clinton flattered himself that he had effectually driven every trace of anxiety away.

As soon as she reached home her first enquiry was for her uncle. He had shut himself up, and desired no one to come to him till he should ring, not even the doctor. Mrs. Chirrup, who, of course, had accompanied her god-child to town, was in a fever of anxiety to hear the particulars of the *esclandre* that was flying about. Miss Ingram told her what she knew, and then escaped.

Safely locked in from the intrusive abigail, the young girl sat down to think. Could it be true, this story? Could that poor ignorant girl be her cousin, the daughter of her uncle, the heiress to his title and estates? She remembered that a tiny shoe with a blue rosette was all that was found of the little Kate Ingram, that that was the only proof they ever had had of her death. Might it be, then, that Lord Ingram had found a daughter and she a cousin in this outcast?

If so, what a change would it make in her prospects. Ah! it was all very well for her to make a philosophic speech to repel Mr. Clinton's slightly irritating kindness, and to excite his admiration, while perplexing Mr. Blennerhasset. But no one knew better than did that gay, apparently careless girl, the exact value of the paper currency used in society. No one understood more thoroughly than she that though Miss Ingram, Baroness to be and heiress of Ingram, and Miss Ingram, of nowhere, and nothing to be, except what she might secure by a fortunate marriage, might be one and the same person in her eyes, they would be two very different and totally distinct beings, not only to Mrs. Grundy—she could have snapped her fingers at Mrs. Grundy—but to all those charming people, whether

distinguished for their politeness, their intellect, their good breeding, or their chivalrous attention, found in Mrs. Grundy's wake.

'What a mean-spirited, poor creature to care for the opinion of such people!' the high and mighty stoics will exclaim. 'What a fool to value the tribute that was paid only to her wealth and rank!' the cynics will cry. But, alas and alas! Miss Ingram was no philosopher; she did not even aspire to be that terrible thing, a clever woman. She was only a warm, not too soft-hearted girl, endowed with a frank, impetuous nature, not altogether animal or sensual, a nature that craved for enjoyments of a certain kind, amongst which social pleasures ranked supreme, yet that could extract happiness from all. And, then, it was not the opinion of these people she cared about: it was the pleasure they afforded her that she could not bear to think of losing. Shut up in a woodland cottage for any given period of time, only looking forward to getting out again, she could be happy as the birds on the tree when they almost burst their little throats with glee. She could have extracted delight from the trees, the river, the tiny flowers, the massive mountain rocks even, though she owned nor tree, nor river, nor flower. But shut up in that woodland cottage for life, with no outlet in view, no prospect of again mingling in the busy stream of life, of again dabbling in the great tide of human intellect, she felt that the birds would be mute, the flowers colourless, the sunlight darkness, that life would not be life to her.

She only interrupted her reverie to enquire if her uncle would see her. She wanted to go and comfort him somehow, but she could not tell how. The answer was always that his lordship would rather not see anyone at present,



and from the thought of the peer, stricken in his chamber, her thoughts travelled more distinctly to the image that had been present with her while her thoughts about herself were most vivid. Was that prisoner Kate Ingram? If so, she was in a cell, herded, perhaps, with convicts of the worst description—bad herself it might be, but not likely to be improved by intercourse with them. Bad? Possibly. She looked poor and wretched enough to be anything, and Miss Ingram's heart was full of pity for the abject-looking thing. Since she could be of no use to her uncle, she thought she would like to see this girl. The thought became a wish, and she only paused in its gratification from a fear of doing wrong. And yet, what harm could it be to see how she was lodged? If she were an impostor, it would be no harm to render even for a little time her lot less pitiful, less revolting; while if she were not, then it was not fitting that Kate Ingram should be left even for an hour uncared for.

Mrs. Chirrup could see no just reason why she should not do what she was so evidently bent on doing. She only begged her to take somebody with her—a concession to propriety flatly refused by the young lady. She would go alone or not at all, and as usual she had her own way.

Just as the carriage rolled away, Mr. Clinton and Rohan Blennerhasset called at Merrion Square. Mrs. Chirrup received them, mentioning incidentally that Miss Ingram was gone out. The two gentlemen went away together.

‘I hardly thought she would have had the pluck to go out, after this morning,’ said Clinton, twirling his moustache and cane simultaneously. ‘I really thought this morning she took it seriously.’

‘Did you?’

‘Yes; didn’t you?’

‘Well, I don’t know whether I thought about it at all. If I did, I scarcely credited Miss Ingram with seriousness.’

I wonder would he have credited her with seriousness if he could have looked into that gloomy prison.

‘Why—Yes! Isn’t that the Ingram coat of arms?’ Mr. Clinton exclaimed, pointing to a carriage before the gates of the gaol, but which moved away as he spoke.

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Blennerhasset, suddenly awakened to interest; ‘and it is empty.’

‘I did not imagine Lord Ingram would have taken any notice of that fellow’s effrontery,’ Mr. Clinton said, much puzzled; ‘much less come here this afternoon.’

‘Lord Ingram is in his room, with the door locked; he answers his servant’s enquiries, but sees no one;’ and Mr. Blennerhasset’s eagle eyes scanned the prison walls as if they would pierce them.

It was a pity they could not, but so it was; and he passed on, forming his own conclusions, clever man that he was; not jumping at them in that insane feminine way, you know, but reasoning them out, bit by bit, and of course arriving at the most correct ones. How should it be otherwise?

‘She is thoroughly appalled by the prospect before her,’ he mused; ‘and she cannot rest till she discovers whether she has a genuine impostor to confront and fight, or not. Will she dispute her position if it comes to the push? Of course she will; it is all in all with her; it is life, breath, to that butterfly, that brilliant, beautiful, but utterly and essentially frivolous girl.’

He was a man of sense, you see, and reasoned out his conclusions like a man.

It was a cold, dank, dreary day, inexpressibly depressing everywhere, absolutely heavy, weighted with the blues, or electric fluid—I leave it to philosophers and ladies to fight it out between them as to which it is. Scarcely a ray of light penetrated into that cold flagged hall, with its heavy barred windows, its low roof, its tables fixed firmly to the floor, where Miss Ingram is permitted to see the prisoner No. 37. On one of the immovable benches, her bright dress trailing on the ground like a glimpse of day, her soft golden hair falling like stray sunbeams, is Miss Ingram. She is charmingly dressed, because it is natural as well as habitual to her to be so, and aristocrat is written indelibly on every line of her irregular but delicate features. A look of intense eagerness is in her eyes, as she surveys the figure standing before her. .

What a contrast! The one resplendent in all the glory of the first blush of womanhood, of wealth, of rank, and refinement; the other thin, pinched, meagre of outline, almost devoid of colouring, a formless mass of coarse, ill-shapen clothing, squalid and dirty, dragged hither and thither to conceal a rent, with nothing human or girlish about it, save the wistful eyes that looked out from under the matted hair.

Like the memory of a dream came to Miss Ingram the remembrance of having seen that thin face before Lizzie's abdication.

'Did I not see you somewhere before you came to Ingram?'

'Yes,' No. 37 answered readily; 'you were with that gentleman on the Thieves' Latin, long ago.'

'What gentleman?'

'Lord Ingram,' the prisoner said, with the sad intona-

tion peculiar to her ; ' it's Lord Ingram I think the servants told me.'

' Did you know him before you came to Ingram ?'

' No.'

' Never saw him before ?'

Number Thirty-seven shook her head, and a faint smile crept over the face that was so old.

' It's dreams I used to have, maybe ; I used to think I'd seen a face like his once somewhere.'

' Where ?'

The girl passed her hand painfully across her forehead.

' No, it's only the dreams. It couldn't be nothing else, you know.'

' Try and remember your dreams.'

' I can't. I used to try long ago. I don't know why, but I did, and I couldn't. I used to want to dream it over again, but I never could anyhow.'

' Dream it ? What ?'

' I don't no. Sure, maybe I only thought I dreamt.'

A helpless, struggling, far-away look came into the girl's eyes as she spoke of those dreams, whose shadow had been so precious to her, of which she had never spoken before, perhaps never given tangible shape. And now, the more she tried to do so the more dim and fantastically unreal did they become. Deeper and more earnest became Miss Ingram's glance, till the girl came back to the present, and to a wonder as to why this beautiful lady looked at her so intently, so searchingly, whose gaze as she looked became wonderfully, oh, yes, so wonderfully pitying and sad. Very wonderful was that look to the outcast, and she looked wistfully into the grave deep eyes till Miss Ingram felt them fill with tears. Mutely wondering at it all, the

girl listened to the voice filled with a rare, sweet music, utterly unconscious that it was her own misery and patient, hopeless sadness that had evoked that wondrous melody.

‘Your life has been very unhappy?’

Number Thirty-seven nodded. That was no news, but she was not used to hear people speak of or notice it, except when the policeman flung it into the scale to make some trifling offence weight.

‘Tell me something about yourself. I am sorry for you.’

Had this beautiful lady, who looked like the picture on Jenny’s box, only a great deal brighter, merely come to steal her secret after all; to made her do what she knew Jenny would never do? A dogged look of suspicion came into the vacillating eyes.

‘I can’t tell nothing at all.’

‘I don’t want you to tell me anything you don’t like,’ Miss Ingram said very gently; ‘but I should like to know some things. Did you ever go to school?’

‘No.’

‘No? then you know nothing?’

‘Only to steal;’ and again the girl’s tone was one of abject humiliation—not penitence.

‘Poor child, poor child!’ and the rich music swelled through the sweet girlish voice. ‘Used you go to church?’

A sudden flush came over the pale face like a blush of life to the dead.

‘Once, ma’am; I went once.’

‘Only once? How was that?’

‘Jenny and me run away, and they didn’t know till we wor back.’

‘But how was it you never went again?’

The wonder grew in the girl's eyes.

'It wasn't for the like of me to go to a church, ma'am. I was a thief, you see.'

'Well, but you mustn't be that, you know.'

'I couldn't help it.'

'But you will if I help you.'

'I can't,' the girl said hopelessly; 'it's no good trying.'

'Why not?'

'It isn't for such as me to be good or honest; it's no use trying.'

'Ah! I know how hard it is for the poor to be good; but you would like to be honest if you could, wouldn't you?'

'It's no good trying,' the girl repeated with a strange fatality.

'How was it you went to church that once?'

'Jenny wanted to go, to be like her mother.'

'Was Jenny a thief?'

'No, no,' Number Thirty-seven said eagerly. 'Jenny was poor and she never went to school neither; but she was so good, ma'am—oh, so good—and she wasn't afraid like me, you see. Sure, there was no one like Jenny for bein' brave, and that's how she was so good.'

'Tell me about her.'

'She wanted to be good, ma'am, like her mother, you know, and she'd ha' made me good too, only I was always afraid. She said she couldn't be respectable in the Thieves' Latin, so she ran away; she was so clever, she got right off. She wanted to take me, only I daren't go.'

'Why?'

'I never had courage like she had; I was no good at all at all.'

'Was that the little girl that spoke to me when I offered her money?'

'Yes, ma'am. She was proud, sure, and it's herself had the big heart.'

Like a flash of lightning came that picture of the defiant elf waving back right royally the stranger's charity.

'She called you a lady, I think; why was that?'

A faint smile flickered over the pale face that was already fading back into its former dulness.

'It was because she was so fond of me, ma'am; she was so good to me always, and she used to beat the other girls when they beat me. She's gone now, you see, and that's how I've got so bad.'

'You are very cold here?' and the lady looked round with a shiver. The girl looked blue from head to foot, but she merely answered,

'Sometimes.'

'I shall ask the governor to let you have a better place, and some warm blankets; and I shall come and see you again. What is your name?'

'Kato.'

'Kato?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Do you feel very sad here?'

'N—o; not more than always.'

'Were you as miserable before you came here?'

'Yes, worse, for the dread was on me; now I'm a'most glad it's nearly over.'

It was pitiful—Oh! it was pitiful. She was only fourteen, and she looked twenty-four. She was only fourteen, and her only hope was for it to be all over.

‘I would be delighted to serve you, Miss Ingram,’ the governor said, ‘but——’

‘But to oblige me you would strain a point,’ Miss Ingram interrupted, with one of her sweetest smiles.

‘Oh, certainly ; but, pardon me, after this morning I should not have expected any of your family to interfere in behalf of such an impostor.’

The sweet young face impressed him strangely as Miss Ingram spoke :

‘She may be an impostor, she may be even much that is bad, but at least one fact remains. She is very wretched—all her life has been misery ; there is no imposture in that. Promise me that you will lighten her burdens as much as possible.’

‘I do promise, Miss Ingram,’ he said almost reverently, as he lifted the covering off his head to the young girl, and the covering off his heart to a nameless something he recognised, though he could not define.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THAT ? THAT MY DAUGHTER ?

‘Yes, yes, you have had your revenge.’

Lord Ingram bowed his head yet lower as he spoke, until it was hidden in his hands, hidden from the baleful glance of that stern, implacable man who stood opposite him. A child’s shoe lay on the table that separated them, and various articles of infant attire ; a white embroidered frock, slightly yellowed with age, a few bows for the



sleeves, a broad blue sash, a pair of tiny socks, and a coral necklace. Side by side with these was a series of portraits; the first of a terrified child held in a man's strong grasp. So perfectly was the face delineated that, though the clothing was ragged and mean, no doubt could remain of its being the one that looked out from the enamelled portrait of Lord Ingram's lost heiress. The next was one taken apparently about a year later, and so on up to the present time. The various proofs adduced were incontestable, and the haughty peer knew that in the condemned criminal he had found his daughter. In the bitterness of his heart he moaned,

'You have had your revenge.'

'Had my revenge, Lord Ingram? No, no, only the first instalment, but I will have the rest just as surely. Wait, my lord, till your daughter comes back from seven years of it—if ever she does come back—and then tell me I have had my revenge—no, not then, not till she is damned in hell, beyond all hope of redemption.'

'Heaven help me!' murmured Lord Ingram, bowing his head yet lower in his humiliation.

'I would say "Heaven help my daughter," if I were you, Lord Ingram,' said the tramp with bitter scorn, 'for, after all, she will have the worst of it. What have you to bear? A few slurs and sneers from a world that can give you nothing, a few taunts and reproaches at your boasted name, a few laughs at your prejudices of birth and blood; while she—think what she will have to bear. Think how every germ of the good that might have been, that may linger in her in these tender years, must be eradicated and destroyed; how every feeling that is not already of hell must become seared under the daily and hourly branding;

how body and soul must become polluted, till she neither can nor will associate with any but those who are like herself. Think of that, and then pity her rather than yourself.'

'Hush! I cannot bear this,' and he writhed as in mortal anguish. 'Why, oh! why, did you not kill my innocent child?'

'Because I wanted to kill her soul,' was the appalling reply. 'Because I wanted her to be like what my daughter was; because I wanted your life to be something of what mine is, and see if the blood makes any difference in our misery.'

'It does, it does,' cried the aristocrat, rising in that hour of supreme anguish. 'My misery is greater than yours a thousandfold.'

'Is it? Oh that I might say "it is true!" I could forgive you all if my lot were only one shade less bitter than is yours to-day. My lord, we are both fathers, we were that on the day I lost my girl; to-day our lot is still more alike, we are the fathers of outcasts.'

Lord Ingram looked from those lurid eyes at the little shoe with its blue rosette, from the shoe to the bows, from the bows to the broad sash, and in none of them could he find a ray of comfort. Suddenly he raised his head with something of the old haughty grace.

'Leave me; I will see this girl alone.'

The tramp left the room, and whispered to a servant—

'My lord wants Miss Ingram. Did I not hear a cabstop?'

'Miss Beatrice is in her room,' and the well-bred lacquey stared in unqualified amazement and disgust at this fiery-eyed man, who wore a frieze coat and spoke good English, and was admitted to his master's presence.

‘No, no, I mean Miss Kate Ingram, who was convicted of theft this morning. There’s the cab.’

There was something so diabolical in the man’s face that the inferior wickedness of the menial was awed into a humility shaped like goodness. He had of course heard all the rumours of what had happened, and of what hadn’t happened for that matter, but was his lordship really going to countenance them? That was another affair altogether, and he looked on, completely dazed, while a policeman entered the magnificent, well-lighted hall, ushering in a thing like a girl, a thing that passed him by without raising its head, and disappeared in the door opened by the tramp.

The wax candles diffused a soft melancholy light in the apartment, a light that did not dispel the shadows lurking in the corners, ah! and that could not banish the shadows stalking about, filling the room with their ghostly presence, yet remaining true to their nature of an intangible unreality. The girl looked round with a frightened glance, yet there was nothing to alarm, only an old man with his grey head bent almost on the table. Why was he so stricken? Was it the thought that she was his daughter that had stricken him with premature old age? So very wretched herself, yet not so destitute but that her heart could swell with generous pity for one who was even more wretched, her whole being thrilled with the passionate desire to comfort him.

He raised his head and looked across at the figure standing humbly near the door. That—that thing, that embodiment of shame and degradation that needed no accusation to proclaim it inured to vice, that spiritless, squalidly clad outcast, that polluted waif from the

stagnant scum of the haunts of crime, that cowering, abject thing, *that* his daughter?

Oh, the loathing that filled his soul at that horrid sight! Oh, to feel the inexpressible disgust he felt for that pale, low-lived girl, and to be told that she was his daughter!

He could not pierce beyond the veil of wretchedness; he could not see beneath the rags the heart that ached to comfort him; he could only see the rags, the squalor, the impress of vicious habits, vile associations; and he looked till his eyes became glazed and dull, till the pain they caused him made him hide them in his clammy hands.

Slowly, timidly, she took a step forward; but he did not heed her. Yet another, but he never moved. Then the voice that was so childish, in such contrast to the old face, floated about the room, blurring the forms of the shadows into a something yet more indistinct, with its sweet accents moulded to vulgar idioms.

'If you please, sir, you needn't look so sad. I'm not your daughter.'

He shook his head sadly rather than angrily as he looked up.

'Sure, sir, it's the truth I'm tellin' you. And what 'd be the good of me bein' your daughter? It wouldn't make it a bit better for me, I know; and so will you let me go back to the gaol, sir? It's all over, maybe, and I don't want it otherways. I'm nothing to you, sir; so don't fret any more. Only let me go back to the gaol, and think no more about me.'

'How can I?' he groaned bitterly. 'I would if I could.'

He covered his face again, hiding it from the pitying heart as he had hidden it from the lurid eyes of the tramp.

He was very miserable, and the sight of his misery

urged the girl on to a bravery she had never dreamt of before, nerved her to a resolution worthy of a heroine.

‘I tell you what I’ll do, sir; I’ll run away, and then, sure, I can’t disgrace you.’

Do you know what it cost her, this offer to run away? Her whole life had consisted of running away; she had spent her days in a perpetual fear of being caught; her nights were endless nightmares of being hunted down. This endless chase was the misery of her life. It was the thought of that being ‘all over’ that enabled her to face imprisonment, hard labour, any certainty, however dreadful, as a refuge from a haunting dread, terrible from its indefiniteness. And now she proposed to begin again the excruciating agony, nay, more, to have for her exasperated pursuer the one whom she feared most of all.

‘Run away?’ he repeated mechanically. ‘Run away, where?’

‘Anywhere from here.’

‘From whom?’

‘My father.’

‘Your father? Is that man your father?’

‘Yes, sir.’

Was it, after all, a trick to get the culprit free? He looked with the dawning of a new hope, but even as he looked it faded. He turned away with a sigh that might have been a groan; then with a sudden thought he took from its hiding-place the little portrait, the treasured picture of the baby girl with the dreamy eyes, with the golden curls, with the strange shadow of futurity on the dimpled face.

‘Do you know this?’

She came nearer, close to the table opposite him, and a

look of interest arose as she looked at the picture he had laid there.

‘Have you seen anything like it before?’

A troubled, far-away look came into her eyes as she whispered—

‘I don’t. I think—somewhere;’ and she passed her hand across her forehead in a helpless, struggling way.

He watched the two faces, the dead and the living, and bit by bit their likeness grew upon him. Clothed in rags, wrapped in the shame of crime, she bore the shadow on the fair face that had dimmed the baby’s beauty. Looking far away into her dreams, the shadow deepened and darkened, the grey-black eyes filled with tears, that fell like heavy rain drops on the colourless cheeks. Almost unconscious of the present, she wept over the dreams of the past quietly, as was her wont, without sob or sigh. And so many cry thus quietly over their dead dreams, and the great world knows nothing about their grief or its cause.

For a moment the name of his daughter trembled on his tongue. For a moment the words ‘My child, Kate, little Kate,’ hovered on his lips, then he sank back despairing.

‘Great Heaven! how I mourned my daughter; but this finding is so bitter, I would I could mourn her all my life.’

She never forgot that man’s despair. Never. Never could that look of loathing leave her sight.

‘I’ll go away, sir. Sure, I’ll never come back again.’

He stared at her blankly, scarce comprehending what she said.

‘You see, sir, if he hasn’t got me he can’t plague you any more. I’ll never come back any more, so don’t fret about it.’

‘Where will you go to?’

‘I don’t no. It’s not much matter; but I won’t come back, sir; then you’ll be all right.’

‘No, no, it won’t do.’

‘Yes,’ she said, though her heart faltered at the prospect. ‘I’m so sorry for you, sir, that it’s about me you should be vexed. Don’t think about me any more. I’m nothing to you.’

Her words sank into his dull ears to be comprehended by-and-by, in all their beauty of self-sacrifice and heroic bravery. Just now he only heard the sweet voice struggling with the coarse accents. He touched a handbell beside him, and it was instantly answered by a bewildered servant.

‘Give this to the policeman,’ he said, writing a few lines, taking upon himself the responsibility of the girl’s re-appearance. The man took it, and Lord Ingram glanced once again at his daughter. Now that he had got her what should he do with her?

She came slowly out of the corner to which she had withdrawn.

‘Would it get you into trouble, sir, for me to run away?’

‘It’s no use,’ he answered drearily. ‘Where would you go to? What would you do?’

‘Sure, that’s nothing at all at all, so as I don’t come back.’

His face was buried in his hands as he pondered what he should do with her. Plan after plan flitted before him, all equally impossible or unsatisfactory. Should he ask Mrs. Chirrup to care for this ignorant girl who was come to usurp her godchild’s place? Or should he proclaim to

the world that the lost heiress was restored? Or would it be any use attempting to disguise, even for a time, what might already be patent to everybody? How long he sat thus he could not tell, but when he looked up the room was dimmer than it had been. The candles flared and flickered, and the ghostly shadows stalked forth from their hiding-places, and flaunted their hideous pageantry before his eyes. Was it these shadows, these restless, shapeless, unreal yet real phantoms, that prevented him seeing his daughter?

He called her, but she did not come. He rose with something of a fear. The room was untenanted by anything save himself and those dread shadows, that grew into a darker, more oppressive presence each moment.

‘Kate!’ he whispered in an awe-struck tone. ‘Kate!’

The shadows only gibbered in answer; the cold wind from the open window struck him on the forehead with a damp, chilling touch. The drizzling sleet flew in and splashed the rich, warm carpet with a marvellous profanity, and hissed and fizzed a stout warfare with the nearest sconce of candles, as though it had been no dainty corner of a nobleman’s mansion, but only the veriest hole that human beings might creep into. Again he called, louder and yet louder. Again his voice went out tremulously into the cold night.

‘Kate, Kate, my daughter!’

The adjuration was powerless now; it had come too late.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

ROHAN BLENNERHASSET REASONS OUT MORE CONCLUSIONS.

MISS INGRAM waited patiently what she thought a reasonable time, then she waited impatiently what she considered a very unreasonable time, and still Lord Ingram gave no sign of having ended his interview with Number Thirty-seven. She hovered between the study door and her own apartments, never by any chance going near Mrs. Chirrup, who sat alone in the morning-room that opened out of the drawing-room.

For there was a shadow on the dear little lady's face that Miss Ingram did not care to see. Mrs. Chirrup could not look placid or cheerful while her darling godchild was being thrust out of her heritage by a vagrant.

'If she had only married Charlie,' she murmured; 'he has enough for both. What will it all come to?'

The enquiry was addressed to her clicking friend, which she had brought from Ingram.

'Can't tell you, can't tell you,' chirped the clock.

'And what good are you if you can't?' said Mrs. Chirrup, bridling up. 'What use are you?'

'Will tell you, will tell you,' said the clock; and Mrs. Chirrup felt that the pendulum was going gravely and solemnly, though it went in just the same time to and fro.

'Ah! now you are sensible.'

'Trouble, trouble, much trouble, great trouble,' wailed the clock.

'Good gracious! but you are a stupid old thing, and



I'm worse to listen to you. Talk sense, you crazy creature, or to pieces you'll go as sure as you're a clock. Trouble, indeed? I tell you I won't have anything of the sort. Prophecy something better, or I'll stop you. I'll let you run down.'

Miss Ingram, having no partiality for clocks, paced restlessly up and down, wondering what her uncle might be saying or doing, till at last she could bear it no longer, and knocked softly at the study door as it struck twelve. There was no answer, not even when she had knocked louder. At last she ventured in.

Sitting before the table was her uncle. He neither looked nor spoke nor moved. She felt shocked at herself for having presumed to look upon his great grief, yet now that she was there, she could not go away without trying to comfort him.

'Uncle!'

He did not answer, did not turn his eyes from the open window through which the sleet dashed freely now, for the tempest was rising, howling over the land, thrusting its cold arm even into that lordly home.

'Uncle, where is she?'

She thought that was the best way to rouse him, and she was partly right.

'Gone,' he said drearily.

'Gone, uncle? You didn't want her gone, did you?'

'I don't know. Heaven help me! I don't know.'

'But where is she gone, uncle dear?'

'I don't know.'

'Did you tell her to go?'

'No, no, I told her nothing. I am sure of that,' he moaned, speaking freely to himself rather than to his

niece. 'She said she'd go away and never come back to disgrace me. That was what she said.'

'Oh uncle, uncle, but didn't you tell her to stop? You didn't let her out in that rain, that cruel wind?' and even as she spoke she shivered, for the room was penetrated with the damp, fierce blast.

'Yes, yes; out in the rain, out in the wind.'

She looked out in the cold dark night, but she could see nothing; only sheets of rain beaten hither and thither by the mighty tempest, and she thought of a thin, ill-clad, barefooted girl being drenched in rain and pierced with wind.

'Poor thing, poor thing, what will become of her?' she said pitifully, wringing her hands helplessly. She longed to ask a question, yet scarcely dared. At length the temptation overcame her dread.

'Uncle, did that man prove his words?'

'Yes, oh! yes.'

The suddenness of the unhesitating avowal took away her breath. She paused a moment, stunned by the certainty of what yet she had expected. All her bright visions must remain dreams, nothing more; all the glories of her gay youth must hide in decent dulness, respectable obscurity. But she could not keep thinking of herself while that crushed man was before her, while it was possible to say a word of comfort to him.

'Then that was your daughter?' she said softly.

'My daughter. Yes, I tell you, yes. My daughter, and a thief.'

'Not so harsh, uncle Ralph,' she said in the grave, sweet manner that had so suddenly come to her. 'You must not remember only her failings, you must remember

her unhappiness as well. Think of the sad, sad life she must have led; how she must need comfort now.'

'A thief, a hopeless, hardened thief, irreclaimable by her own confession.'

'Do you too think, like that man who made the speech, that it was so very strange she should not suddenly have thrown from her all the habits that have been instilled into her by habit, ah! and by cruelty? Are you so unreasonable, so unjust, as to expect anything so monstrous? Children tenderly reared, and fondly loved, spend the best years of their lives learning the principles that shall guide them in future life, learning them from a hundred teachers; and you expect a poor untaught child, with no one to speak a kind word to her, to fling off the teachings of her whole life, and acquire goodness and uprightness. How do you know what she might be if she had the chance?'

'But she had the chance. There's the sting. She had the chance, and she would not live an honest life.'

'Oh! this is too absurd,' Miss Ingram exclaimed indignantly. 'I tell you she had no chance. You take a poor wretched little creature, always badgered about, always subject to cruelty and ill-usage, every desire except for evil stunted within her, and you expect her to appreciate being good, denying herself that which she can comprehend for what she knows nothing about. I tell you that it is impossible, except for the finger of God, to uproot the growth of years, and, I repeat, the girl had no chance. If you want her to have any fair play, put her with kind, gentle, loving people, who will work unceasingly in eradicating the taints that do not belong to her nature: then I will tell you she has had a chance to be honest.'

‘She’s gone.’

‘Then we’ll look for her to-morrow, shall we not, uncle? Cheer up, you do not know what nobility lurks in that uncultivated mind, that poor suffering heart. See even now what she is capable of! She runs away from your grand house, because she sees you are disgraced by her presence. Why, uncle, there are many nobly reared who could not do such an action.’

A ray of hope lighted up his dull eyes, then he shook his head desponding.

‘He told me she could never bear to face an honest life, and I believe it.’

‘I do not,’ said Beatrice Ingram with generous indignation. ‘She has done for you what her misery never could goad her into doing for herself—made that man her enemy. And all her life has been so miserable. Uncle, dear uncle, think of her wandering houseless, shelterless—your child, your wife’s child. Let me call up the servants, let me send them to look for her, let them bring her back to you to be comforted after her sad, lonely childhood.’

He stretched out his hand as if to shut out the clear, sweet voice, to shut out the vision of the pleading face, towards which he turned the light of his cold, clear eyes.

‘She is gone; let her go.’

‘Oh, uncle, no. I cannot.’

‘You cannot? If I can, why not you? What do you lose? I lose a daughter, all hope of having one; but what do you give up?’

‘Oh, uncle Ralph, you acknowledge that she is your child, and still you let her go?’

'And still I let her go,' he repeated in a mechanical voice. 'I did not send her away, mark; I did not send her away; but she is gone, and I do not wish her back, though I would fain help her if she would let me. I shall go down to my grave childless, but my honour shall be unspotted before the world.'

'Oh, how cruel you are!' she exclaimed passionately. 'What is your honour before the world to the future of this poor child whom you so heartlessly desert, to fall into whatever sin comes in her way?'

'I did not desert her,' he said, still with the same metallic ring in his voice; 'but she is gone, and I am content. I desire to remain so. I must not be disturbed from a purpose that it has cost me so much to arrive at by your vain arguments, for it has cost me much, very much, do you understand?'

He leaned his hand on her shoulder as he spoke.

'You are very cruel, but I forgive you,' she said, as she marked the lines a night had set on the broad brow, the hollows of the eyes, the drawn corners of the patrician mouth, the fearfully cadaverous aspect. 'Yes, you sin terribly, but you suffer also. Yes, yes, you pay a great price; and yet what is this which has cost you so much? What you call your honour is only your pride.'

'My pride is my name, my name is my honour. Are you, an Ingram, incapable of comprehending this? But if you do not understand, at least you will obey; and I tell you I do not wish her name again to be mentioned. I desire it to be forgotten. No, no, Miss Ingram, no arguing; at least I must still be obeyed.'

There was an almost ferocious pride in the humiliation

of this aristocrat. Stern, unalterable determination gleamed from the scintillating eyes. Miss Ingram felt that she could have hated him but for the great misery that battled with his cruel pride.

‘You are very cruel,’ she repeated, slowly turning away, ‘but you are very miserable too. I could hate you for this cruel determination only that I pity you so much.’

• She fastened the window, and bid him good-night, wondering whether she had done him harm or good. She went out bravely and proudly, though she knew that for her the battle was ended. She had not seen the proofs, but she knew by Lord Ingram’s despair that she was Beatrice Ingram, nothing more.

Rohan Blennerhasset had called at a very late hour, having, in fact, promised to accompany them to the Vice-regal lodge that night, and had somehow lingered with Mrs. Chirrup, heedless of the time, till it was nearly one o’clock. He was just saying good-bye to his hostess, when Miss Ingram passed up the staircase. He knew by the set expression of her lips, by the glittering light of her eyes, that she had recognised her position. But had she accepted it? He could not tell. There was that in her face that told of a great resolution. Was it a determination to battle it out, to contest her ground inch by inch? He could not tell. No, not even when she stopped to say good-night and ask if he had not been to the lodge, and then passed on; but he thought it was, and, as I told you before, he was a clever, sensible man, and always reasoned out his conclusions properly, that there might be no possibility of a mistake. Besides, if you remember, he prided himself on his penetration, the infallible instinct that

taught him to read men—aye, the very Machiavellis of them; and if men, surely a frivolous, shallow, transparent butterfly of fashion.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

## MISS INGRAM AGREES WITH HER GODMOTHER.

MR. BLENNERHASSET was right. Miss Ingram had arrived at a great resolution, one at least that might have commended itself to him for its reckless bravery. In considering this resolution, to do it justice at all, remember always that the real adulation, the feigned adoration of the great world, so empty to philosophers who do not comprehend it, so obnoxious to cynics who cannot secure it, was neither empty nor obnoxious to this young girl, who was neither philosopher nor cynic; who accepted the real and the false, each for what it was worth, and derived from both all the elements of pleasure, intellectual or social, that they contained; that these things were, in fact, very dear to her, from her peculiar appreciation of them, that she would do much, very much, to secure them.

‘And is she really gone away?’ Mrs. Chirrup said next morning. ‘Why did you not tell me last night? I should have slept better to know that the horrid creature was out of the house.’

‘Don’t talk that way, dear little fairy godmother,’ Flossy said, in her pretty imperious way. ‘It’s not like you.’

‘Not talk that way?’ and Mrs. Chirrup pushed her



chair back from the toilet table. 'Why, how do you expect me to talk any other way? Do you think I'm an angel that can sit and see a thief—literally not figuratively a thief—come in and rob you? I assure you I'm not.'

'No, you're not an angel,' and Flossy Ingram seated herself on a footstool, with her arm round the old lady's tiny waist, 'but you are my dear, kind, gentle, fairy godmother, who wouldn't be unjust or cruel to anyone, least of all to a poor little waif knocked and tossed about all the years that I have been petted and fondled and made a sort of goddess of. That's it, isn't it, dear? and you wouldn't speak of the faults of such a poor little stray, without speaking at the same time of her wretchedness? You wouldn't think of what she did, without also thinking of what drove her to it?'

The sweet young voice had grown grave now, and Mrs. Chirrup's brilliant brown eyes filled with tears, and she looked down with something of the reverence the governor of Mountjoy prison had felt.

'I suppose she was very unhappy, my dear,' she said, softly stroking the soft hair. 'But for all that I can't believe she's your uncle's daughter.'

'The proofs are incontestable, godmother,' Miss Ingram said quietly.

'I shall not believe it till I see them, and in the meantime I do not think you need talk about it.'

'Certainly not,' Miss Ingram assented eagerly. 'I was going to propose that to you. I shall not mention the matter to anyone.'

'Exactly. Let it die out; for as I tell you she is no daughter of your uncle's.'

'Even if she is not,' Miss Ingram said slowly, 'even if

the proofs are deficient in your eyes, I should like her to be found again. Will you impress that upon my uncle ?'

'What for, my dear ?'

'It could do no harm to make her life a little brighter, a little happier.'

'True, Flossy ; and now I must go and examine these proofs. I have not patience to wait any longer.'

It was long before she returned, and Miss Ingram sat all the time on the low footstool, not idle though her fingers were unoccupied, but as busy as ever she could be. She got up when her godmother came back, and went over to her, putting her arms round her, looking steadfastly in her face for a few seconds.

'You are satisfied, godmother ?'

'No no, my dear,' and she burst into a passionate flood of tears ; 'how can I be satisfied to see you disinherited, thrust out by one whom I do not know or love ?'

Miss Ingram made no answer except to lead her godmother to her chair, resuming her own old position, and Mrs. Chirrup wept and talked, and talked and wept.

'But perhaps she'll never come back. I hope she never will. You cannot be displaced as long as she does not appear.'

'True, godmother.'

'I suppose it's very wicked of me, but I do wish it ; and Ralph doesn't want her back I'm sure, so why should you or I ? Dear, dear, I'm very sinful, and I grow worse the nearer I go to the grave, my dear ; but somehow I cannot think of that girl being miserable and unhappy now, I can only think of her coming to thrust you out, and when I think of that, I hate her.'

The poor little lady knew every word she was saying, and yet she said it, and could not help saying it.

‘It’s very wicked, Flossy, I suppose?’

‘I suppose so,’ Flossy said; ‘but it won’t last.’

‘Well my love, I don’t wish her ill, but still if she never came back, how much happier we would all be. There is no harm in saying that, is there?’

‘Do you think we should be happier?’

‘All this would be forgotten, my darling. If she was not to be found, you would still be the heiress of Ingram, baroness to be.’

‘It is true, godmother,’ Miss Ingram said again.

Mrs. Chirrup never forgot that conversation, nor the expression of her goddaughter’s face as she stood by the window looking out at the rain that still drizzled and spit at the moaning wind.

‘How she must have got drenched last night, godmother. But bringing her back now wouldn’t alter that, would it?’

‘Well, scarcely, my dear.’

‘And dry clothes and a bed would be just as good anywhere as here. Isn’t that what you mean, godmother?’

Mrs. Chirrup was not conscious of having meant anything.

‘I suppose I meant that.’

‘And if she shouldn’t get shelter, still she is so used to suffering she will not mind it. Is that it?’

‘Ah, my dear, when I think of her so sad as that my heart aches for her. Poor thing, drenched with rain too!’

‘Drenched with rain, covered only with rags, hungry. No memories to look back to, no future to cheer her on.

Struggling with a mere instinct of life against the wind that had better batter her down and leave her dead, that can do no kinder thing than bruise her poor existence out of her.'

'Don't, don't, Flossy,' said Mrs. Chirrup, putting her arms round this young girl who was so dear to her. 'I'm very sorry for her—but, I can't help it, I'm sorry for you too.'

'Ah! godmother. So am I.'

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ROHAN BLENNERHASSET'S SUSPICION.

THE great world was on the *qui vive*. Much had transpired that had happened, and much that hadn't happened as well, which, as I told you before, is nothing new; and few will need to be told that in the work of picking the Ingram coat to pieces more genuine satisfaction was experienced by Christian people than is often crammed into one season of concerts, balls, theatres, picnics, and fashionable services. Some said the peer had turned the impostor out of doors, others that he had owned her for his daughter, but driven her out in the storm for disgracing him; some declared the ex-prisoner was living in state in the old Place whither the family had gone, reigning in the room of Miss Ingram deposed, and that it was the latter who was banished; while some related circumstantially how the lost heiress was smuggled off to France to be immured in a convent.

The Hotel Maurice in Dublin was the favourite dining

centre of many men of letters. It was also the resort of fashionable idlers, and Mr. Clinton and Charlie Devereux occasionally patronised it. The two latter stood talking on the steps, when a close cab drove up.

‘Your cousin will lose the best of the season,’ Mr. Clinton remarked.

‘I shall be sorry if she does,’ Charlie answered; ‘but she would not remain when my uncle was going. I thought she would have stayed at Lady Waldegrave’s.’

‘Did Lady Waldegrave ask her?’

Charlie Devereux’s handsome eyes flashed fire, but Mr. Clinton stopped his haughty response.

‘Don’t misunderstand me, Devereux. I am older than you, older, perhaps, than you will ever be, for you have a young heart, and though I am no cynic I know the world. That is why I ask did Lady Waldegrave ask your cousin to stay with her. Lady Waldegrave is a woman of the world; one of those who rule wise men, and are in their turn swayed by fools. To her the heiress of Ingram and plain Miss Ingram are two very different personages, let me tell you.’

‘If I thought that,’ Charlie exclaimed impetuously, ‘I would cut her to-morrow. Or, no, I cannot as a gentleman very well do that, but I will tell Flossy to do it.’

‘Do you imagine, then, that in repeating what I have said to Miss Ingram you would be telling her anything she does not know? Why, what a doll you and Rohan Blennerhasset would make of her! And yet, let me tell you, she is no doll.’

Out of the cab stepped a cloaked figure, muffled up beyond recognition that dusky afternoon. The two gentlemen scrutinised it with some curiosity; then forgot it.

Rohan Blennerhasset, who had just come out, joined in the scrutiny, but not to forget so soon. He stood on the step talking to Charlie Devereux and Mr. Clinton. Yes, and he stood there long after they were gone, recalling over and over with marvellous minuteness the exact folds of that long grey dress, devoid of ornament of any description. What was the wearer of it doing there? Above all, what was she doing in such mysterious guise that might well baffle all eyes but his?

Suddenly it struck him what a mean thing he was doing. He was waiting to get another look at one who evidently did not wish to be seen. Flushing even to the temples at the thought, he turned hastily away, and turned down another street which the back part of the hotel looked into, the building forming a square with a yard in the middle. Standing under the shelter of a portico was the lady with the long grey dress and veil and thick cloak, but he did not perceive her until he heard her voice.

'I shall depend upon you, then; your diligence shall be rewarded. But remember above everything—make no disclosures to anyone but myself. That is the point I wish to impress upon you. Upon that hinges the success of my plans. Not a soul must know that I have employed you.'

'Sure, ma'am, it's myself that understands every bit of it. Silent as death, secret as the grave. You goin' out front, ma'am? All right, then, this is my way.'

Another moment a man brushed past Rohan Blennerhasset, pushing him ever so slightly against the lamp-post. He turned hastily with a 'beg parding, sir, if you're a gentleman; you beg mine if you're not. Lor, sir, is it you, Mr. Blennerhasset? Fine night, sir, this.'

‘Yes, beautiful weather for getting the scent, eh?’

‘Yes, sir, capital, not good for a trail though; it’s too dirty weather for what’s after all dirty work.’

The bead-like ferret eyes, the turned-up nose that had a peculiar air of scenting intelligence from every trifle, the big heavy jaw that looked so like hunting down vermin, were well known to the lawyer. It was Job Ferret, the detective, the cleverest in his line in Dublin, and they were obliged to have some clever men there to cope with the ingenuity of the Dublin prowlers.

It was Job Ferret. But what was Job Ferret doing with the wearer of the long grey dress?

‘Ah! but she’s a deep one, she is;’ and Job Ferret rubbed his hands with a dry chuckle. ‘And she thinks I don’t know who she is, or what her motive is, as if the one wouldn’t tell the other; and she gives me a sham address to write to—me, as if I didn’t know her like A B C. Well, well, why should I spoil her little game? more especially when I’m paid for putting the dogs on. What’s it to me if she wants—as is only human nature—to keep what she’s got? Lor, for the matter of that I’d do it myself, and it’s not to be expected a tip-top grandee should have as good principles as a hard-working fellow like me. And for the matter of that, she’ll know better what to do with what she’s got than t’other poor creature—for instance she has the gumption to pay; other one wouldn’t—not she.’

So you see, like Mr. Blennerhasset, Job Ferret worked out his conclusions, and he, too, was a clever man, only in his own way. To show the certainty of such working, it is worth recording that both, though never for a moment in collusion, arrived at precisely the same solution. Could anything be more logically demonstrative?

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

## BALFE GROWS JEALOUS.

It was lonely enough in that old round house at the end of the Latin. So the tramp found it as he sat and smoked by the dull chimney, and saw in the curling wreaths visions of the man he hated, sitting with his daughter beside him, listening to a low voice that called him father, perhaps, watching the firelight bring out on the girl's face the lines that marked the baby's.

'And she was always so queerly gentle she'll learn the lesson easy enough. Who taught her? I never did, nor nobody that I ever knew of; but gentle she was, and nothing could make her vicious. Why, why? who has done it?'

In the curling wreath he saw the reflection of the morbid answer his mind framed.

'Is it in the blood? Or is it that the same Heaven that lets the rich man ruin the poor man guards the lord's treasure? Is that it, and is he even now exulting in the thought? Fool! does he think I will leave it to him? But no, he shall never have that satisfaction. If I cannot destroy her, her goodness shall not be for him.'

He flung his pipe in the grate with passionate vehemence. The air of the place oppressed him and impeded his thoughts, so he wrapped himself in his heavy coat, while honest men shivered under rents and patches, and went out. The door flapped dismally on its hinges; there was no one to shut it, but he took no heed. A few minutes' walk brought him to the Shivers. There was a



light in the crazy tenement, and pushing the door open he found the Otter.

It was damp, there was no denying it. The Otter himself had something damp and limp about him to-night, as though even he had succumbed to the influence of the place. But anything was better than that solitary fireside, with no companion but his fierce brooding sense of wrong, and just now the grievance uppermost was the discovery that he actually missed this girl. She had been a better daughter to him than his own poor girl had ever been; but was not this only the more reason to decry the partiality of Fate? The companionship of the Otter was preferable to that, and after a surly greeting he sat down.

‘Heard of anything?’ questioned the Otter, after a pause, not quite accustomed to friendly calls.

‘No.’

The Otter would not have been at all surprised to hear that an obliging fire was about to occur at some store, or that a valuable service of plate awaited his acceptance in an accommodating vault. Things which would have surprised ordinary men took no effect on him, coming and going, and leaving him sleek and slimy as ever; but the blank ‘No’ did surprise him. If Balfe had not come on business, what had brought him?

But Balfe was not in a humour to be communicative, and the two smoked away in silence. Even the production of the stone jar elicited no remark from the tramp; when his glass was filled for him he emptied it and went on smoking.

At last he spoke.

‘Have ye never heard from the girl?’

‘No,’ said the Otter eagerly; ‘have you?’

‘No.’

Again there was a pause. Then Balfe asked—

‘You miss her, don’t you?’

‘Jenny? Yes.’ There was an involuntary plaint in the man’s voice.

‘You wor a fool to let her go.’

‘Bedad, there was little letting in it, an’ I’m not quite sure I’m so much of a fool after all. It’s not to a grand house I sent her with my eyes open, at any rate.’

‘But I’ll get *her* back;’ and Balfe meant what he said.

‘Perhaps you will, and perhaps you won’t. A girl likes fine things and fine people; a girl likes to look down on hard-run fellows like you and me; ay, an’ a girl finds it easy to get fond of them she’s with.’

‘I don’t know,’ sneered Balfe, nettled by the Otter’s remarks; ‘your girl didn’t seem to find it so easy, and she had a good many years to try.’

The Otter made no reply; he smoked in silence, a little more downcast than before.

‘I wasn’t the sort for Jenny to like,’ he said at last. ‘She had uppish notions, had Jenny, and took after her mother to think about respectability and all that nonsense. It’s much the same your girl was, only she hadn’t Jenny’s spirit.’

‘Maybe she hadn’t what you call spirit,’ said Balfe contemptuously; ‘but she put you and me at defiance for three weeks, and then we didn’t get the better of her.’

‘Ay, it’s wonderful, it is, the holding out there is in these girls,’ said the Otter reflectively. ‘Skinny and poor they look, that you might double them up in yer fist, and when they take a thing into their heads, it’s like pulling a screw out of a rotten plank to get it out again. Ye can’t

do it without a smash, though for that matter it's the wearing of ten men they have.'

Decidedly the companionship of the Otter was not more enlivening than his own thoughts, and muttering a growling 'good-night,' he walked out into the darkness, back to the flapping door that had no one to latch it. He sat down by the gloomy fireside, hard and bitter thoughts bearing him company. He thought of Alice, and wondered why she had never returned to him. Then he thought of the girl who had been better to him than his own. Then he reflected that he had given his enemy that which he never had had until of late. And should Lord Ingram sit in pomp and luxury, ministered to by his daughter, satisfying the cravings of his heart with her affection, while he sat childless in that lonely tenement, by that blackened hearth? Should that be his revenge? No, no, no. He buttoned his frieze coat with the air of a man who has a purpose, and strode out.

What a fool he had been to suffer his heart to open to that innocent baby, thinking he would shut her out when she was grown up! She was grown up now, and he did not hate her as he ought. He had never meant to think kindly of her, even as a helpless child, but somehow the unsuspecting confidence, the appealing helplessness of the infant, had crept into his heart unawares. Fight against it as he would, with all the might of a strong will and an undeviating purpose, he could not alter that now.

Ingram Place was wrapped in darkness; but he had been told the family had come there that day, and the lateness of the hour did not deter him. The great pile loomed gigantic in the night, and the plashing fountains were only distinguishable by their tinkling music. Here

and there a star struggled through the dull clouds and twinkled down through the thick branches of the stately trees, as if inquisitively demanding what that tramp could want in the pleasure grounds of Ingram Place.

The bell resounded with a startling clangour under his vigorous touch.

‘I want to see your master.’

‘You do, do you? Well, now, that’s very polite of you. How’ll I announce you?’

A glance from those fiery eyes stopped the stream of eloquence.

‘I’ll save you the trouble, specially as my name might shock your nerves. I’ll announce myself.’

He pushed the man aside as he would a feather, and found his way to the study. There was something in the fierce rap that warned Lord Ingram of what was coming.

‘Again!’ he said passionately; ‘again do you come to me?’

‘Again? Have you forgotten that I am your daughter’s guardian? And have you forgotten my promise?’

‘She returned to you?’

‘Returned to me! Who?’

‘That girl.’ He could not humble his patrician pride to name her.

‘You don’t think to baffle me this way, my lord,’ Balfé said with superb scorn. ‘Do you imagine I can’t fathom your design, or do you think I cannot hunt her out in any corner of the earth?’

It was plain he knew nothing of her, and Lord Ingram rang the bell for the servant to put him out. Yet stay. He might find her, although the detectives had failed. Would anything induce him to be merciful?

‘If you found her, would you have no mercy?’

‘Mercy—yes, the mercy you showed I’ll show. Could I imitate a more perfect gentleman than yourself?—and I mean to follow on your heels so closely that you will be ready to swear I have blue blood in my veins.’

Lord Ingram paced restlessly up and down. Oh! how he longed to strike to the earth this demon who lorded it over him in his own house; this plebeian, who with sacrilegious hand tarnished his patrician name, trampled his pride in the mire! Oh, to feel that he wanted to trample upon him! Oh, to feel that passionate hate, that goading madness to be revenged! Oh, to feel all this and to know he could do nothing, that he was hopelessly in his clutch, that he must hide his loathing and hate and revenge in his heart, that he must restrain his fury for fear of further exasperating the tiger who held him in his grip—nay, worst of all, to know that he must temporise!

‘Should you find her, what reward will you take to give her back to me?’

‘Nothing. I want nothing for doing my duty. I will restore her at the end of seven years, and ask no reward but to see it.’

‘I will give you gold, land, houses. You shall be so rich that you will never want to steal—not independent, but rich. How much—five thousand down?’

‘All that, my lord, wouldn’t do. It couldn’t save my soul.’

‘It could; yes, it would. You could spend the years of your life in goodness. I will give you double.’

‘Too late, too late! Were I to be an honest man from this till the day of my death it wouldn’t save my soul, it wouldn’t wash out the wickedness of all the past. I am blackened beyond washing out, if I had an eternity

instead of a few years to try for it. It's no use holding out that reward. My being good your way wouldn't save me now, and I couldn't be if it would.'

'What reward then—places, pensions? A situation under Government, or an annuity?'

'None of these; yet if you give me what I want I will find your daughter for you.'

'What is it? I promise.'

'Only my daughter, my lord. My innocent little girl that went away in the convict ship eleven years ago. Bring her back to me pure and good, with only that one crime on her that pitying angels might wash out, and, though even that cannot save me now, I will forgive you all for her soul's sake. I will not pursue my experiment on noble blood, and you will be no longer childless. Will you find her for me? Would you, callous aristocrat that you are, dare to seek her? Would you have the courage to look for her in the dens and caves of the earth, the habitations of cruelty, of inconceivable iniquity, into which you have thrust her?'

Lord Ingram sank in his chair, but he gazed as if fascinated at the stern face, the powerful massive brows knit so fiercely under the matted locks.

'You tremble, you shiver, you would not dare that. And why should you? It would help you to gauge my misery, not to relieve it, for your search would be vain; as well might you think to bring a sheaf of straw from out a furnace. But now, my lord, I'll show you the generosity one of the rabble can be capable of. I'll send back your daughter on one condition.'

Lord Ingram looked with a wild clutch at hope. He was relenting, this fearful man.

‘What?’

‘That she is willing to come.’

The sardonic laugh swallowed up the phantom hope, and Lord Ingram felt himself struggling in the dark water without even a straw to grasp at.

When he looked up the tramp was gone.

‘Find his daughter? Where? How?’

There was something painfully vacillating in the nobleman’s expression as he revolved this idea; it absorbed that other of Balfe seeking the unfortunate vagrant who had run out into the rain and wind. Whether his faculties had become weakened or his nerves shaken by the harassing anxiety of years, culminating in an overwhelming disgrace, he could not separate the ragged child who had looked at him so pitifully in that room from the young offender whom he had not spared twelve years ago.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE. WHO WILL WIN?

A QUEER old corner of a lumbering attic, partitioned off, sloping so much that there was only room to stand at one side. Half a chair—that is to say, three legs, the seat, and two rungs—the best part of a deal table, that has really no fault to speak of excepting a chronic affection for coming to pieces under any weight; a jug without handle or lip; very nearly the whole of a basin capable of containing at least a quart of water; a small oblong bundle at the low

side of the garret, with a suspicion of a bolster and the idea of a quilt.

There is a little window too, not big enough to see out of, nor yet to let much light in, but so near the floor that you can sit on the ground and flatten your nose against the cracked pane, and catch a glimpse of the blue sky, or, if it is a fine day, take rags out of the broken one and squeeze your head a little way through, and fancy you are breathing the air of heaven and listen to the mysterious busy hum that comes up from the street, far, ever so far below.

A weird tiny figure sits by the window now. Not looking out, oh, no, that takes up too much time, but stitching coarse garments and small fingers with equal ruthlessness. A queer elfish little creature who would have looked more at home on a broomstick than sitting there doing sempstress's work.


It had been strange work to Jenny, and by no means easy, to go from one shop to another, begging humbly for employment, only to be refused, and always on the score that to whom has, shall be given; to walk patiently, footsore, and heartsore from house to house, stating her urgent need and willingness to work to fishy-eyed, fishy-hearted women, who had no sympathy for any distress not their own; to wonderfully wise, respectable men, who knew better than to believe in it, or to credit that such as she should want to earn her bread honestly.

At times the rebellious, passionate nature revolted against the thousand causeless, curious enquiries, ended with, 'I hardly think you'll suit me;' or, 'I have no work now, but if you like to call in the spring and bring good references I may try you.' At times she would answer



slurs and sneers with passionate taunts or biting sarcasm, prompted by her keen perception of the ludicrous; bitter recrimination against those who extracted her history, only to ask her in pious horror how she could presume to ask them to be the first to risk trusting her. Yes, at times Jenny Joy nearly gave in—nearly, but never quite. Sleeping sometimes on a mat, but oftener on the bare ground, now and then begging the shelter of some hovel, here this night, there the next, she persevered, though starvation stared her in the face, though Christian charity seemed sterner than the sternest justice of an offended Deity. She persevered, though handkerchiefs peeped temptingly from convenient pockets, though every haunt where she could safely dispose of stolen articles was well known to her. She persevered in her determination to be respectable and earn an honest living 'like her mother,' though hundreds of easy-going, good-natured people passed her in the streets waiting for her to beg a copper, though she could have earned more in a day by holding out her hands and assuming a pitiful whine than she seemed likely to get in a year for all this weary humility, trudging through the business streets of Dublin.

The reward came at last. Not in the shape of a grand gentleman, who fell in love with her in her rags, and married her in an assumed name—that is the general way, though why there should be any necessity for an assumed name, goodness only knows, unless it is that he is ashamed of the girl he is represented as voluntarily making his wife. No, nor in the shape of some rich relative suddenly discovered. Generally speaking, in these times, if relatives don't turn up before they are rich, they don't




turn up at all. Not even in the guise of a marvellously rich and equally eccentric—that is the polite term for cracked—old lady wanting an heiress, or some charming old bachelor wanting a daughter. My experience has been that the eccentric old ladies always have more heiresses than they know what to do with, and who, in the nineteenth century at any rate, save them the heart-rending necessity of seeking legacy-hunters in the back slums of a city; and as for the wealthy bachelors, bless their hearts, let them be as ugly as sin, or as wicked as that amiable creature Nero, I would guarantee them any amount of charmingly disinterested friends with large sympathies and larger families. No, no, the age of romance has gone by, I have been told on good authority. I have heard it doubted, on equally good authority, that it ever existed, except in the brains of some scattered Don Quixotes; and Jenny, though bearing every external evidence of being the lineal descendant of some Kerry witch, or some wise woman of Rathdrum who had intermarried with the ‘good people,’ had lost every trace of the art of evoking supernatural aid; so it didn’t come in a fairy legend either.

No, it came in a much more commonplace way, as befits the essentially commonplace age we live in. The mistress of a small back shop, who employed some dozen women to do the work of thirty at the wages of five, was suddenly overrun with work—sailors’ clothing. She was induced to try the black-eyed girl whose patient persistence had been an offence to her; and finding her a trifle cheaper kept her on. She did not know, she would not have cared if she had known, that the first work was finished by the light of a brick-kiln.

Brave Jenny Joy. Happier than a princess with that first sixpence honestly earned, she battled with her hunger long before she could part with it. No more stray coppers to keep her from starving, no more begging for stale loaves when the fierce hunger had the mastery. She could earn now. What though it might be so little as to barely keep her life in her? What though she should toil day and night, night and day? She had set her steps in the way her mother walked, and she looked her life boldly in the face with an exultant courage that defied its gloom and its dangers.

Hard work? Well, yes, it was hard work, to keep on when the first flush of triumph had died out, leaving her inert and languid. But was it not something to think that she was able to pay half the rent of this garret, which she had nearly to herself, the girl who occupied it with her being out all day? If her cheeks had grown more pale and more pinched, if her eyes had grown larger and deeper, if the circles round them had become a blue-black rim, what of that? She was respectable, 'as her mother had been,' who was with her all the day long, and through the dismal, wearisome nights when she wanted to sleep and couldn't.

Never mind if she felt ravenously hungry when there was nothing to eat, and daintily delicate when she had purchased her dry loaf. Never mind if the ravenous hunger died away, and the pulse beat feebly, and the blood crept if it crept at all in a slow, indolent, lethargic fashion, that rendered exertion a trouble. Never mind if the passionate longing to fly once more at full speed through the open fields or across the brick-field—aye, or even down the crowded lanes, anywhere so long as she could run and



know again what rapid motion was—gave way to a single desire to be let sit still, that made her wonder how she could be so lazy. When that thought came, she would rouse herself with the old energy; for a moment the sluggish blood would flow more swiftly, but only to creep with slower, duller pace, with a wearier, feebler struggle for vitality when the excitement was over.

So the battle began and waged first fiercely, then insidiously, on the part of the opposing forces, and brave little ignorant, untaught Jenny Joy combated as bravely the latter tactics as the former; fought stoutly, blind as she was, for the little light she had, and asserted the royal prerogative of her human birth to its possession.

Ah! but she had not won yet. And partial hunger, and whole starvation, and mean, scant clothing, and lonely days in a bare shivering garret, and aching shoulders, and scalding eyes, and feverish nights, are powerful forces in Satan's army; mailed warriors to be pitted against this poor little elf, hampered by her ignorance, her long habits. Who would win?


## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE BATTLE RAGES. WHO WILL WIN?

SLOWER and longer became the walk from the garret to Mrs. Kneadwell's with her bundle of work. The steep, narrow staircase seemed steeper and narrower and higher each time her tired feet mounted the four flights of rotten boards.

Toiling down their treacherous depths she comes this wet, windy Saturday night. The streets are not the principal ones, but there is a flare of gas in them from the stray lamp-posts, a flicker from the grocery shop, a dazzling stream of radiance from the public houses. What wonder that the enticing domains of whiskeydom should be crowded to overflowing; what wonder that poor, comfortless, hungry wretches should throng to those comfort-promising counters, ablaze with light, warm with sociability, glittering with crystal, genial with coarse merriment? What wonder that all these charms should outweigh in the minds of famishing men and women the prospect of a cold hearth, a dry crust, and a cup of tea? ay, and the dread of a bitter waking would be encountered for the blessed privilege of forgetting for a while.

Poor cold, hungry wretches, is it to you it was said: 'No drunkard shall enter into the kingdom'? No, no; that warning was addressed to the polished, refined, wealthy Corinthians, who out of pure gluttony and wilful debasement steeped their souls in sinful forgetfulness of the gifts of a beneficent Creator, wantonly ruining the best, the grandest of them all, putting aside with fearful profanity the magnificent attributes of a higher creation, to lower themselves from the likeness of a Deity to the level of a brute. To the rich, the refined, the fortunate, the happy, that sublime denunciation of determined degradation was delivered; not to the poor, the comfortless, the abject, the miserable. Don't imagine that I am pleading a justification for drunkenness on the part of our poorer classes. Nay, I hold sin to be an actual as well as a relative thing; drunkenness is drunkenness whether in the beggar or the king; but I would only remind you of the extenuating



circumstances in the case of the former—which, not being a Poet Laureate, I may remark do not exist in the case of the latter. And does it not say in a sublime old book, enriched by the Laureate of Laureates, that to whom much is given, of him much shall be required? Not a usual maxim with Laureates you know, who—very naturally, being paid for it—preach the divine right of those to whom all is given to give nothing in return.

She looked into the whiskey shop, that weary, comfortless girl, with the heart sinking within her for lack of nourishment. She knew the taste of drink. She knew that the bright liquid would put fire into her veins, and gaiety and warmth into her cold heart, and bright dreams, short but bright, into her head. And oh, how she craved for something that would do that! She saw the quickly-gathering throng, shouting and laughing like kings and queens with newly-gained thrones, singing and jesting in reckless revelry, doing homage to the god that gave them one hour of blissful forgetfulness, that made them oblivious for a space of their rags and leanness and mental and bodily degradation; and she longed to taste the magic cup that should make her one of them, so that she too might be rich with fancied possessions; that she too might sing and shout, and forget the real to reign in an ideal world, and revel in boundless wealth.

The battle was raging now. Who would win?

Brave little Jenny Joy. Shivering, wet, hungry, and weak, craving for anything, even that fiery fluid, something that should make her either less or more alive: she turned away. Turned away, though her foot was on the step, and her hand on the sevenpence put by to make up the rent with what she should receive.

Mrs. Kneadwell looked at the laggard keenly, and scrutinised the work.

‘It’s badly done,’ she said. ‘You’re not much of a worker. How much do you want for this?’

‘How much?’ Jenny faltered in surprise. ‘Sixpence.’ It was the usual price.

‘Sixpence? Why, I suppose you know all the wages is fallen? I can’t afford to give you more than fourpence.’

She never blushed, that hard, grasping woman; she only felt uncomfortable beneath the gaze of the mournful black eyes that seemed to read her through and through.

‘Fourpence? It took me the whole of yesterday and to-day, and the best part of last night. The candle was a halfpenny; you offer me threepence-halfpenny for two days and a night.’

‘If you don’t like it, you can go elsewhere,’ said Mrs. Kneadwell coolly. ‘There’s your money, and you can take it or leave it. I can get plenty of workwomen, and thankful ones too.’

So she could, women and girls by the score, thankful and willing to come, Heaven help them, if so lifelike a feeling could be said to animate their starved souls and bodies.

She took the money up and looked at it. Fourpence for two days and a night. That with what she had would still be a penny short of the rent, and she had calculated on having a penny over. All the old rebellious spirit rose up within her, and she flung the pitiful coin from her with bitter, bitter words. Galling taunts, that made even that callous, griping woman wince and blush, came from the passionate lips, that curled in fierce, angry scorn as though



hunger had never pinched them. Then she went away, desolate and miserable, after the passion was spent.

Why had she not taken the fourpence? It would have paid her rent and given her a loaf for the next day. But she could not humble herself to go back for it, and she wandered about listlessly in the vicinity of the whiskey shops.

And they looked so bright and cheerful, so temptingly comforting in their glory of gas-light, glowing big and bright; and merry, reckless mirth, ribald it might be, but still merry. True, oaths and angry altercations mingled with the frantic laughter as the night wore on, and the drink wrought its vengeance on the revellers. True, now and then a brawl rose high above the gaiety. True that faces began to grow flushed and sullen, or pale and set in a villainous pallor; but at least it was not all gloom, not all black, bitter darkness—at least it was still warm and bright and mad.

Oh, to be mad for a little! O, the wild craving for a temporary insanity, in which her shivering soul might be warmed and fed and clothed! Even the thought of awaking to colder, bitterer want did not appal her like the fierceness of the present.

‘Prime stuff, not a headache in a cask of it, and good measure. A noggin, Phil Mooney, for you? Ah, sure, but it’s yourself is the bad pay, only ye know I haven’t the heart to refuse ye, ye villain. Ah, Mr. Flanagan, ye see how they impose on my good nature and put the com-ether on me. Ale for you, sir? Sure, now, but it’s cold stuff for a night like this. Ye’ll thry this? That’s right; that’s the stuff to warm the dead. Ha, ha, beyond proof is it, Jack, ye rogue? It’s yourself knows what’s what.



Clean glasses for the ladies, ye spalpeen. Well, my girl? Come along. This is what'll cheer your heart, if ye lost every relation undher the sun. Come on; this is what'll make the woman of you.'

She stood heedless of the many curious eyes, her own like two shining jets fixed on that tiny glass of burning poison. Oh, the warmth, the cheeriness! Oh, the cruel wet and cold! The battle was raging now. Who would win?

She turned once more. What saved her? Was it the thought of the dead mother? Partly, and partly the remembrance of a weak, infirm old woman who lived in an empty room, with an uncovered, flagged floor; a wheezy, rheumatic old woman, who toiled about that tumbledown house, conciliating the lodgers she could not bully, bullying those she need not study; a poor, irritable, failing old woman, with never a kind word but often a fawning one, but a woman who had been made what she was by a grinding poverty her nature was not strong enough to resist; a poor old woman who had no subsistence but the precarious rents she bullied and wheedled. Should she rob that poor old woman? Should she riot, though famishing, on the money that was justly another's? Would her mother have spent it, though she starved, to wrong one so miserable? No, no, no; a thousand times, no. Talk of honesty! There is no honesty like that of the poor.

Away, away from that inviting palace, where the warmth and glare of light and loud-voiced mirth blinded and deafened her, to what misery might be behind—nay, staring her in the face. Away from the fantastic fascination of the spell that should, if only for a moment, endow her with wealth of friends and happiness. Away from the light and life and hope of respite back to the dingy garret.

‘Why don’t you go back to your father, Jenny?’

It was a question Anne Temple often asked. She was utterly at a loss to understand the motives that induced Jenny to endure so much hardship and privation when, by simply returning to her father, she could enjoy plenty. She never exactly comprehended why Jenny should wish to enrol herself amongst the honest poor, whose sufferings are so terrible, when, by remaining in the Thieves’ Latin, she could have everything that they had not, except respectability; and somehow this respectability seemed such a cold, dead thing to this ill-nourished, round-shouldered, coughing young woman, who was passively honest chiefly because she had not strength to be actively anything. She never counted odd scraps of muslin or silk left over in the workroom, though she had a very orthodox horror of stealing, under which head came the abstraction of anything of a yard in dimensions. She did not see why Jenny should not take part in what her father would plunder, whether or no.

There was no trace of a fire. Though Anne could work at finer material than Jenny, she could not afford such a luxury as that, even had there been a grate. To-night the fare she warmly invited Jenny to partake of was particularly poor and scant, for, with the cruel thoughtlessness human creatures can exercise to their fellows, her payment had been left over till the Monday.

‘But I daren’t say a word,’ she explained, ‘or I’d have got the sack. And that villain of an old woman won’t trust me with more than this penn’orth of tea. She says I kept her too long out of her money that six weeks I was idle.’

Looking uneasily at the dark eyes that grew bigger

and drearier with each sputter of the tallow candle that would soon be out, Anne renewed her queries, and did her best to allure Jenny to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt. Ah! Despise these flesh-pots, ye full ones, for whom the earth pours out its fatness; sneer at your weaker brethren who can be so sorely tempted by so vile a thing; grind them down in the dirt, trample on the despicable wretches, and go on your ways rejoicing that ye are not as they are. Oh, how savoury and alluring these same flesh-pots looked just now to the weakened frame; the delicious odour came up to her very nostrils, creating a giant appetite, but she made no sign of the struggle within; she only looked at Anne with those great sad eyes of hers, and said—

‘I want to be respectable, Anne; my mother was.’

‘Respectable, fiddlesticks,’ said placid Anne with more energy than usual; then relapsing into her easy-going way, she remarked—

‘Sure, girl, you needn’t steal there any more than here, and what’s the good of starving yourself to death? Who’ll be the better of it?’

Jenny only shook her head, and declined the repeated offer of a share of the tea and bread. The ravenous hunger had partly passed away, and she could not snatch the insufficient morsel from one as poor as herself. Instead of that she went out, taking the sevenpence with her—to buy food, and let the rent wait, Anne naturally concluded. She did not see her go down to the old woman and tender her the money in part payment, an offer that was accepted with grumblings and muttered threats which followed the heart-sick girl out into the sloppy darkness.

All night long Anne Temple stayed awake in the

rattling garret, wondering why Jenny did not return. She was a nervous girl, and all sorts of superstitious fancies came, but not Jenny.

It was a gloomy, murky night. Great black clouds drifted overhead like a pall, and the river flowed on in silent majesty, turbid and swollen, a dread, sullen majesty such as the brow of Lucifer might wear. Jenny stood dreamily thinking how pleasant it would be to end all her sorrows, to finish for ever the fierce strife between good and evil, to drown her life and her misery in that voiceless tide. She had been back to the shop, and Mrs. Kneadwell had not only refused to give the fourpence, but forbidden her to come again for work. What could she do?

‘Where did you work last?’ ‘Why did you lose it?’ ‘Can you bring good references?’ Oh! she knew the routine well, and the thought of it sickened her.

In that supreme moment a wonderful flood of pity for the father she had forsaken filled her heart. No thought of returning crossed her mind, but she wept and murmured pitifully, ‘Poor daddy.’ It was so hard to be honest, she could forgive him now, she could pardon him for all he had ever made her suffer. Then she cast herself into the sullen tide and floated away.

The cold thrill of the water roused all the life that was in her, and with a frantic effort she stretched out her hands. But the marshy banks, the slimy rushes, eluded her grasp, receded as she drifted onwards.

The momentary struggle was over. The gurgling waves lapped her and laved her with a mesmeric touch that lulled her to rest. Softly crooning, came the lullabye

the dead mother had sung in the days long gone by. A sweet, strange melancholy enshrouded the image of the father still striving and fighting to live in that far-away world, ignorant of this sublime rest that had come to the castaway.

A dull thud, a sharp pain, something that stopped the lulling motion of the waves, and caused a discordant jar in the low sweet wail of the kindly river, something that impeded for a moment that drifting repose. Again she floated on, again the death-song soothed her.

Not a heavy, dull thud this time, not a sharp pain. Something soft and swaying rocked her to and fro. Then faces loomed dim and visionary upon her, voices sounded in her ears.

What was it? Ah! she knew. The end was coming, and her mind was wandering.

Soft hands held her tight, a voice that was sweetly, sadly familiar breathed her name: 'Jenny! dear Jenny!' Were the old days of Jenny Joy come back, was that Kate calling her to save her? Yes, that was Kate's face and eyes. Did she want her? Was she in trouble? Yes, Kate was calling her, to help her, it must be.

'Jenny dear! dear Jenny!'

Wanted her to help, to save her. She roused herself with a supreme effort, then the voice wailed far, far away, the face faded. Again she felt the cold river close round her, and all was peace.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE OUTCASTS FROM THE THIEVES' LATIN MET AGAIN.

THE dawn came, cold and chill and drear. Down on the marshy banks wandered a houseless vagrant. Who else indeed would be there, and at such an hour? Who that had house or home or friend would walk there in the cold early morning, drenched with the rain of the night that made the rags cling heavily to the thin figure? Who that did not fear policemen, aye, even the passing glance of the stray labourer, would plunge recklessly into that damp loam that nourished the reeds here?

Looking around now and then she plodded through the innumerable pools rather than face the streets in the coming day. Walking feebly and languidly, she stumbled over something cold and wet. Stooping down in the imperfect light to examine, she found the body of a girl thrown there by the river tide, and entangled in the reeds, with a great gash in the head. Some homeless, hopeless vagrant like herself, no doubt. She turned the inert mass reverently and fearfully, as the streaks of light in the east struggled into a dim existence, and a fearful cry went up from that river side.

'Jenny! dear Jenny!'

No answer; only a fitful smile that the mocking light caused to play about the white, drawn lips.

'Jenny, dear! dear Jenny!'

The fitful smile died away as the light became clearer, and only the cold, still face with the ghastly gash looked up at her.

A black mass loomed higher up the river ; it came nearer and nearer.

'This is the place. I say, lend a hand, you, there, and make the rope fast,' shouted the master of the cargo boat.

'Not here, not here,' shrieked the girl ; 'not over her dead body.'

'Get out of the way then, if you don't want to be keel-hauled.'

It was coming, coming against the reeds and rushes. Great Heaven, the boat !

It came, but only brushed the reeds, and a man jumped over the side into the wet marshy soil.

'Tell ye what, mate ; here's a go. Dead as a herrin'.'

'Help me to carry her,' said the vagrant humbly. 'I can't let her stay here.'

'Where to, my girl ?'

'I don't know. Anywhere out of this.'

'To the hospital ?'

'Yes, if you please.'

The man with the assistance of a comrade placed the form on a piece of sailcloth. Close to the river was a house where lights were burning in an upper window. With a sudden thought Kate attacked the door, begging the kindly sailors to wait just one minute. It was the workshop where some half-dozen wretched women eked out their day's pay by working all night when work was plenty. One of them answered the hurried summons.

'It's so far to the hospital. Give me a drop of something for the love of Heaven ; maybe she's not dead.'

The woman gave one glance at the cold face looking up unmoved at the morning ; then she rushed upstairs.

'Oh, Mrs. Kneadwell, she has drowned herself.'

'Who, who?' demanded the mistress, wakened by the noise. 'What is it?'

'Jenny Joy is dead.'

The woman turned pale, then went down to the sailors and asked what they wanted there.

'Not much, ma'am, if so be as ye'll let us take the poor little creature in for a minute, and maybe ye'd lend us a blanket, and get a spoonful of spirits. Have you a sofa anywhere handy? No? Well, a table will do.'

'But she's dead, isn't she?' exclaimed the woman, recoiling.

Two of the girls more pitiful than the rest brought, the one a blanket, and the other some whiskey. Kate held out her hand for the latter, and lifting the head with its loosened black hair she moistened the lips and poured a little into the mouth. Then they wrapped the blanket round her, and one of the sailors rubbed the face and hands as vigorously as he dared with that ugly wound. But no sign of life came, and the wet, shivering wanderer moaned.

'Not dead. I don't believe it.'

'Was she anything to you?' one of the sailors asked.

'All I had in the world. Oh, Jenny, brave, true, generous Jenny, why should you die and not me?'

A faint flutter, a stir of the pulse. Was that a sigh? With a wild cry the girl clasped her hands.

'I knew she wasn't dead; she couldn't be.'

'Yes, she's got a little life in her yet. The sooner we get her to the hospital the better.'

'Yes, yes, to the hospital! I knew she couldn't be dead.'

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW DR. DALZELL VENTED HIS RIGHTEOUS WRATH ON TWO  
VAGRANTS.

‘Up and dressed?’ and Dr. Dalzell’s firm, stern brows knit ominously. He was not a man to look lightly on a trifling breach of discipline, and this was flagrant disobedience.

She was not dressed in hospital livery either, that elf-like little witch who glared defiantly at the doctor.

‘How’s this, Mrs. Watkins? What does this mean? I want to know, if you please.’

Mrs. Watkins who was passing stopped and dropped a curtsy to that awful politeness. It foreboded anything but polite conversation.

‘Law bless you, sir, it’s mad she was like to go if I hadn’t given ’em.’

‘And what if she had, ma’am? Which do you think it’s better—she should go mad or I? Since it must be one or the other, upon which do you think it was fitting your choice should fall? Perhaps you will favour me with your views on the subject—your candid opinion, ma’am, if you please.’

‘Dear heart alive, doctor. It’s not yourself’d go and get mad. I’d back ye again the town for that.’

‘But I tell you I am mad, ma’am, and very good cause I have to be mad.’

‘Sure it’s not contradicting ——’

‘Indeed? I suppose, then, what you mean to insinuate is that it’s impossible for me to be any more deranged. It’s

on a piece with the rest of your behaviour in this hospital. Now, don't snivel! Don't! I'm mad enough, I tell you.'

Mrs. Watkins wiped her eyes with her big apron while the doctor underwent an electric shock.

'Mad? I believe you.'

Not from the cringing nurse came the scornful tones that gave such force to the words.

'Sure it's truth ye say, every word of it, barrin' what's lies;' and the elf's eyes laughed up at the big, burly man with contemptuous audacity. 'What's the sense of your having it out with her, when it's me that done it? I tell you if she hadn't give me the clothes, it's not mad I'd have gone, but it's stark staring mad I'd ha' driven her and you too.'

'You would, you little reprobate? Do you know who you're talking to?'

There was a sudden change from defiance to humility.

'Sure, sir, it's not myself would forget your kindness. Don't think that. Only, if you please, don't scold other people when it's all me.'

'Oh, that's it, is it? You're going to rub me up, and slither me down. Well, do you know, it won't do. I'm not a horse.'

'Sure sir, they do it to donkeys too,' Jenny said meekly.

'Indeed? Well, perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me what's the meaning of this. Why are my orders flatly disregarded? If you have no objection, I should enjoy knowing.'

'I'm going out, sir.'

'You are? And who gave you leave?'

'My leave, sir, is just that I can't stay.'

'No? So you are going. Back to the river?'

'No, sir,' she said eagerly, 'to Kate.'

'And I presume Kate is the young female who brought you here?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Bright pair.'

'It's no good I am,' Jenny said, her eyes flashing, 'but don't talk of her. You know nothing about her, only that she's poor; and what right have you to say of her what you wouldn't say of a lady in her carriage? And she's a lady too; born one.'

'So I should imagine,' the doctor said with grim irony. 'And it was this young lady counselled you to disobey me?'

'No, sir, oh, no. But how can I lie in my bed and think that Kate is hungry? That's why I want to go, sir; I must work for her.'

'You were pretty hungry when you came here?'

'Yes, and maybe Kate is now. I must go.'

'You were hungry. Good. You didn't refuse your food, I presume?'

'No.'

'You were hungry because you had nothing to eat. That's about it, eh?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And so as you couldn't feed one, it'll be the easiest thing in the world to feed two. You're a logical young woman, you are.'

'I could do for Kate what I couldn't do for myself;' and her cheeks burned, and her eyes flashed with the eagerness of the thought.

'Get into bed, get into bed. Do you think I'm not up

to your dodges? Pray who gave you the charge of that young woman?’

‘It’s just this, sir. It’s a weak little creature she is, just a lady born as I told you, if she had only the fine clothes. She not as strong as me, never was; she’d be no good to work by herself.’

‘I comprehend. She’s not handy with spoons, etc. No. She hasn’t the look of it.’

‘She’s no thief,’ said the girl with passionate vehemence, ‘and if she was, what have you to say about it? Who is it makes thieves but honest people like you? Would one of you stretch out your little finger to help her to be respectable? Suppose she could work, would you give her some?’

‘I’d rather not try.’


‘And then you talk and you call her a thief, as if that was the worst name you could call her because she’s poor. But I’ve been to church lately, and I tell you I’ve learnt worse words than that, and Pharisee is one of them.’

‘You’re a clever young woman, very, but you don’t disobey me if you were as clever again. Supposing I credited that you want to work for a girl that’s got two hands the same as you, after having demonstrated, too, that you are unable to work for yourself, what am I to say to the magistrate when he sends to know why you attempted to commit suicide?’

‘Who says I did? Who saw me? How do you know but some one shoved me in?’

‘You’re a clever young woman, I say again. But there t her proofs beside seeing.’

‘And supposin’ I threw myself in, who’s to say again’ it? What’s it to anybody what I do with myself?’



'Is it possible you do not realise the enormity of your offence? Why that's just the very thing that's everything to everybody.'

'Sure I can do what I like with myself?' and the black eyes stared incredulously at the orbs that twinkled so puzzlingly under the beetle brows.

'Do what you like with yourself? I should think not. That's just the very thing you can't do. Do you know that there is a law against suicide? A law which you have broken. Just think of that.'

'Is there any law to prevent me starving?'

'To be sure, plenty. Poor-house laws and the deuce knows what.'

'An' what was the good of me goin' to a poor-house, sir? Every time I came out I'd be as bad as now, an' if I went often they'd get sick of me. An' even if they didn't, do you think I could live always that way? I couldn't—I wouldn't. Besides, it wouldn't be a bit honest than picking pockets.'

'I'm afraid you're a very, very wicked girl,' the doctor said with great sternness. 'But as you talk about honesty, I suppose you know there is a Deity?'

'Yes. It's long I knew His name, at any rate.'

'Well, then, my girl, do you know that life is His best gift to man? Life now, life always. Do you know that to touch that is the worst crime in the land? To touch your own, the worst against Him, because it admits of no repentance.'

She looked at him without comprehending.

'Sure, sir, that's all very well for rich people. Besides, I can't help it.'

‘But surely you have read something about Heaven and Hell?’

‘No, sir, and it wouldn’t make any difference if I did.’

‘You know nothing of a future state?’

‘Except that we’ll all burn, and you’ll all have grand crowns.’

‘Is that all you know of a good God?’

‘That’s all.’

‘And you talk of being honest? You told me that it was in your struggle for respectability you came to such straits.’

The fire was quenched in the tears that welled up in the great sad eyes.

‘Oh yes, sir, my mother was honest, my mother was respectable. That’s why.’

‘You benighted little pagan,’ exclaimed the doctor gruffly. ‘And while I’m wasting my time enlightening you, my patients are waiting. Here, Mrs. Watkins, give this outrageous rebel a wrap. She shan’t catch cold till I’ve time to punish her. What time do you expect that other scapegrace?’

‘Can’t say, sir; she’s been here four times to-day.’

‘And you never told me,’ burst out Jenny resentfully. ‘Maybe she won’t come any more. Maybe she can’t. Maybe she’s sick, dying, dead. What’ll I do?’

‘Why, go to her. You’re going, you know.’

‘Yes, I am. An army wouldn’t keep me; but where’ll I find her? Oh, if she’s dead, I’ll come back to you I will, an’ I’ll drive you mad in good earnest.’

‘Very good. If she should come you’ll let me know, Mrs. Watkins. And, Mrs. Watkins—isn’t there a cup of broth to spare anywhere?’

'Sure it's the good heart you have, doctor'—and Mrs. Watkins used her apron again—'and to think of your having patience through all that.'

'Patience! Good Heavens, ma'am, I haven't a scrap, not a shaving, I assure you, and least of all with snivelling. Don't—don't do it. Or, yes, do; fire away. I'm going; and you'll very likely be finished before I'm back.'

It was dusk when Kate ventured again, and she was confronted by Dr. Dalzell.

'Well, young woman?'

She shrank a step back from the burly doctor, and he advanced two.

'I only want to know how is Jenny,' said the singularly low sweet voice.

'And pray who is Jenny?'

'Jenny Joy, sir. Her that came here this morning.'

'No one came here this morning. A deluded young female was brought here after attempting to drown herself. Is it that hopeful young person you came about? I thought so. And aren't you ashamed of yourself even to know such a character? But you don't know her much, I suppose? I hope so, at least.'

'Oh yes, I do, sir,' and the worn thin face glowed, and the scant rags swelled out as though they covered a form of nobleness, not a shivering, fleshless wanderer. 'Sure, sir, she's the best friend ever I had. It's not ashamed of knowin' her I'd be, and her a thousand times better than me, a thousand times grander and braver and kinder than anybody I ever knew.'

'As to bravery, I admire yours. To talk that way about a girl who wanted to drown herself. But perhaps you can give the reason for that, as you know her so well?'

'It wasn't a bad one, that I know. I know Jenny, sir, I do, indeed; and if she wanted to die it was because she wouldn't be a thief.'

'If she wanted? Didn't you see her do it?'

'No, sir; I found her in the rushes.'

'You mean to tell me that you didn't advise her to jump into the river?'

'Me? No, sir. I'm too much afraid.'

'You never tried it?'

'I daren't,' and she shivered. 'I was always a poor coward; never like Jenny.'

'Is it only because you were afraid that you never tried it?'

'Yes, sir. I often wished to; but, as I told you, I was always a coward.'

'Well, well, well. Live and learn, they say, but I never learnt so much in a day. You're a bright pair, one as bad as the other. It's all very well thrusting this rigmarole down my throat, but what do you mean to tell the magistrate?'

She stared blankly at him. He grasped her by the shoulder as with a wild instinct she receded, and the old hunted look came in her eyes, the old pain at her heart. He could not sustain the sight of that ashen face.

'Ah! that strikes home, does it? And not a bit of flesh on your bones! Dear, dear, that such a scarecrow should break the laws of the land.'

'What are you doing to her?' demanded a fierce hissing voice, very low down. He looked down with a comical admiration at the little lithe figure, the blazing eyes and heaving chest.

'Oh, it's you, spitfire. Out here too without orders.



Here, you Jim, into the pantry there, and tell Mrs. Watkins I want the dose I told her for these rebels. I'm with you. I'll dose you, and teach you to rebel against a disciple of Galen. And, good gracious, I wonder could she spare another wrap ?'

Jim returned with the soup, but without the wrap.

'None? I suppose not. Jim, there's an old dressing-gown in my room. Suppose you get that.'

Jenny caught the spirit of the scene, and laughed and cried alternately, but Kate sat eating her soup in a timid, frightened way, glancing now and then at the doctor, who kept guard like a great ogre at the door.

'Will he send me to gaol ?' she whispered fearfully. The ogre caught the whisper.

'If you were worth it I would. But what's the good of trying to do anything with a little skin and bone like you? Pray how many meals a day do you take? Three? Tell the truth. Not three, two, one? And you're not ashamed to sit there and confess it?'

The girl stared at him, completely terrified, but Jenny went up to him.

'Good-bye, sir, and thank you for everything, but sure Kate's soup was the best of it all. Don't be angry, if you please, sir, for me going.'

'Why not ?'

'Because you see, sir, Kate is by herself, and you see yourself what a weak little creature she is. She wants some one to take care of her.'

'You're a fine big protector,' he exclaimed, looking down at the elf, who never in all her life looked more elfish. 'But it's a good job you're going, or you'd have every patient in the ward demoralised. That woman up-

stairs never snivelled so much in her life as since you came. Don't you take off that dressing-gown, or I'll put you in the insane ward.'

A policeman suddenly stood under the gas lamp in the hall. He was making enquiries of the porter. Kate turned deadly white as she clutched Jenny's arm. The sight of her livid terror was too much for the doctor, and he hastily slammed the door of the refectory, which led into the hall, and opened another.

'Here, this way, through that room, there's another door, and a hall, and a door at the end of the hall. You'll come out in the garden, then go round the house.'

They were gone almost before he had finished.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW ROBERT DALZELL GOT TIRED AND HUNGRY. GOOD  
FIGHTING AGAIN.

ROBERT DALZELL walked slowly along the new road as it was called—the road which lay between Kilcoran and Ross. He looked dreamily on the world of verdure that lay around him, the endless fields, stretching up to the very blue tops of the hills that rose in countless tiers on either side that marvellously luxuriant valley, with its wonderful vivid green, its snowy sheep, its clumps and belts of dark trees not yet stripped of their autumn foliage.

He looked down suddenly into a pair of dark piercing

eyes that looked up at him and startled him for a moment out of his self-possession. He had not noticed these two children coming towards him, till he literally looked down into the face of the one. They might have started up out of the ground for aught he knew.

He stood and looked after them with a strange feeling of curiosity, then continued his walk till the evening air became chill and sharp enough to induce him to turn and make for home at a more vigorous pace.

Close to the town he came again upon the children. There was nothing picturesque in their attire or appearance that night to shake the painter's soul; there was not surely any romance to a grey-haired man to whom success had come too late in the sight of two barefooted, thinly-clad girls, entering what might be a strange town, a new world, or might be just the market-place they had been accustomed to all their lives. Yet with the same indefinable curiosity he had felt at first he watched them now.

They went into the first small shop they came to, but before he had come up they emerged, empty-handed, and the next was tried evidently with no better success.

What could they want? Every shop was tried, especially clothing and drapery shops of all descriptions, the painter following mechanically, his wonder at them and himself increasing each moment. The night closed in, and now not a house with any pretensions to respectability was passed without some petition, he could not tell what, being preferred; and he could see, as he waited for them to come up, that the gas lamps flared down on a sickly disappointment that was creeping over the young faces.

Nine o'clock struck, and Mr. Dalzell had had no dinner. His feet began to be very sore, and he thought theirs must

be too. He began to feel hungry, and he guessed they must be the same. Why did they go wandering about like that, making their and his feet sore?

‘Never mind, my dear; never mind, my colleen,’ said a brave, but a weak, little voice; and he could see the great black eyes upturned to the other’s face, with a wonderful light of hope and courage shining in them that not hunger nor that gloomy night could quell. ‘It’s only for to-night, my dear; to-morrow we must get work, surely.’

‘I don’t mind a bit;’ and the pale, sweet face smiled down with answering bravery. ‘Sure it’s no worse for me than for you.’

‘Oh, yes, my dear, it is,’ said the little creature; ‘but it’s better, anything is better, than going back to the old life.’

‘Yes,’ said Kate. ‘Anything, even to die. No matter how you see me, never think I want to go back.’

The rain, that had been holding off all the afternoon, suddenly pelted down on these houseless vagrants; pelted as rain only pelts ragged, miserable creatures and cotton umbrellas. They took shelter under the portico of a dwelling-house.

‘If they would only let us stay here,’ Jenny said, ‘how comfortable we’d be! But you’ll see the policeman’ll be round directly, just as if he smelt us.’

‘Why don’t you go home, children?’

In the darkness Jenny could only discern a tall figure, but the voice was kind and sounded familiar. With the instinct of her class she knew it belonged to a gentleman.

‘We’ve nowhere to go, sir.’

‘Nowhere?’

‘No, and we’re waiting here till the rain stops a bit; then we’ll go on.’

‘Go on where?’

‘Walk about till mornin’. You see, sir, the policeman won’t let us stand still.’

‘Good heavens! Have you no lodgings even?’

‘No.’

‘Why? No money?’

‘No;’ and there was a desponding ring in the voice now. ‘We’ve hunted for work ever since five o’clock, and couldn’t get a bit. If we could get work to do, we could promise to pay for lodgings.’

‘How do you mean to manage now?’

‘We must put up with it to-night. Sure, to-morrow some one will give us work to live.’

‘You don’t lose heart, then?’

‘Sure, no, sir,’ and the voice was brisk and cheery again; ‘and if we do, it comes back again.’

He put some money in her hand.

‘That will pay for shelter to-night, and you can work to-morrow.’

‘Oh, sir, sir, we’re not beggars; indeed, we’re not. Won’t you let us do something for this?’

‘I don’t give it to you as beggars. I give it as from one human being to another in distress, as I would wish anyone to give it to me did I want it.’

He was gone, and the children, scarcely crediting their good fortune, made their way to a humble lodging-house, and found they could indulge in a bed and a supper.

The next day was wet, but that did not deter Jenny from going to look for work, nor Kate either. They tried every soft goods shop in the town, whether they had tried it before or not; then they offered themselves as servants, but no one would have anything to do with them in that

capacity, for Kate looked too delicate, and Jenny too like a witch. Then they returned to the charge on the soft goods shops and private houses, and at last fairly wearied out the town people by their persistent demands for work.

Inch by inch the children fought their way. Fainting often beneath the burden of a hidden past; starving often before the closed doors of their wealthier brethren; shivering in the cold chill of suspicious inquisitiveness, that threw a blight on all they did or attempted to do.

Yet no, not on all. Some little ground they made as the weary days went by. Some place was found for them in the great world of workers, who, though so noble, so praiseworthy in many respects, are apt to look arrogantly and superciliously on those who have not always been of them.

Jenny was a better worker now than when she first set out to look for her fortune and become honest. She procured a little work after having been denied times innumerable, just when all her resources, even of endurance, were exhausted; when she and Kate must have lain down in the street and died if help had not come.

Robert Dalzell felt some regret that he had not taken some steps towards seeing the children again. He knew enough of them, in that dreary afternoon wandering, to feel that they were neither beggars nor impostors. But would they faint at the outset of the weary journey so bravely begun? Or would they carry their burden, in spite of flinty roads and bleeding feet, till it was taken from them by the hand of a very merciful Father, and a voice bid them rest sweetly till the great awaking? Would they have strength for that, these weak, small children? Why had he not secured the means of helping them more effectually?

It was thus his thoughts were running, when a shrill voice arrested him, and a tiny bunch of moss roses brushed against his sleeve.

‘If you please, sir.’

He looked down into the dark eyes that he had seen a fortnight before.

‘What? Are you turned to selling roses?’ he said, with a kindly smile, as he stretched out his hand for the fragrant flowers.

‘No, sir; but, if you please, those are for you.’

‘For me?’

‘Yes, won’t you keep them? I took a present from you, sir.’

She looked so much in earnest that he could not refuse, and her face absolutely flashed with satisfaction.

‘Thank you, sir,’ she said, as humbly as if she had received a kingdom.

‘But stay a moment, I want to speak to you.’

‘Oh, I’ve got work now, sir, and all through you. You see, that money kept us till we were able to fairly badger the people into trying us, and now we’re to get work regular.’

‘What is your name?’

‘Jenny Joy.’

‘Well, Jenny Joy, I think you’re a brave little girl, and I like these flowers very much. I shall take care of them for your sake. But how did you know me?’

‘I knew you when we passed you on the road, and I guessed it was the same when you spoke to us.’

‘Why, where did you see me before?’

‘In church, sir. Don’t you remember, we sat in your pew?’

In an instant it flashed before him; the demure,

reverent children, the sudden onslaught of the beadle, his own reflections as he walked home.

‘Then it didn’t discourage you, that Sunday.’

‘No, sir, I ran away that week.’

‘Ran away?’

‘Yes, from where I was living.’

‘Ah, I understand. And since then you have been fighting your battle.’

‘Yes; but bad, awful bad some of the time. I’ve got Kate now: if I had her before, I wouldn’t have pitched myself into the river.’

She saw Mr. Dalzell was inclined to think well of her, and she was resolved to let him know the enormity of her wickedness. The same royalty of nature that prompted her to spend a hardly-earned sixpence on a grateful present for the gentleman who had been kind to her, compelled her to decline his friendship when offered to anyone but the identical scapegrace, Jenny Joy, she felt herself to be. She saw the horrified look on his face, but she did not repent her temerity. It was better he should know the truth than keep on calling her brave, and giving her credit for fighting, when she had, coward-like, run away.

‘Why did you do that?’

She told him in her quaint dry fashion just the simple truth, and he listened and believed. A sentiment of wonder took possession of her as she observed his belief, for before that desperate night, she had told her story of poverty, her wish for honesty, to so many, and met with only hard incredulity that would be moved by no facts.

‘I see after all I was not wrong in saying you were a brave little girl. How should you know that what is put upon us it is our duty to bear, that if we are bidden



to starve we must not seek to rid ourselves of life in some quicker way? It is a hard doctrine.'

It certainly seemed not only very hard, but very odd too, to Jenny. She didn't comprehend it, nor did she want to.

'That mustn't happen again, Jenny Joy,' he said.

'Oh no; I've got lots of work now, and then I've got Kate. It's not likely I'd go off with myself, and she wanting to be took care of. Bless you, she couldn't do without me now.'

'Well, you're not very rich just yet, so this is a little present to help pay the rent.'

But the sallow face flushed as with the air of an indignant duchess she stepped back.

'You don't think ——'

'No, I don't. I know quite well you didn't expect it, but it's no harm to accept a present.'

'Yes, sir, it would be harm, it would be mean, when I've work. I was a thief once, but I never was mean.'

'I can believe that,' he said, feeling he had done wrong. 'I should only wish to help you on a little.'

'No, sir, while I've work, I won't take nobody's charity; but if I was ever starving again, there's no one I'd like to help me as much as you.'

'And I took a present from you.'

'That?' and she pointed to the roses, 'that's only a few flowers, sir; they wouldn't be worth looking at, only I wanted to show you I wasn't so ungrateful.'

'Well, if you should come to such dire distress again, come to me.'

'Oh, but I don't think I will,' she said with elfish cheeriness. 'It's work I've got, and I'll stick to it.'

'That's right, but in case of any accident, my name is Robert Dalzell.'

'Robert Dalzell?' repeated the girl, in a sort of stupor, and great tears welled up in her eyes. 'The man who loved my mother.'

It never struck her that there could be another Robert Dalzell, and she repeated the words slowly, her dark eyes fixed on his face, her two small hands clasped. The houses and the carts and the busy people faded from her sight. She saw only the face of the dead mother, and the man who had loved her even to the end; so she stood immovable. The pale face with the deep lines quivered like autumn leaves stirred by the strong wind.

'I thought you said your name was Jenny Joy?'

'It's Joice; only we used to play Jenny Joy, and I thought it an honester name.'

This, then, was Susie Longford's child, the daughter of a common thief.

He questioned her like a man in a dream, and found that Susie, simple innocent Susie, whose woman's heart had made such a woful choice, had never forgotten the man who had loved her so truly; that she had recognised under every disguise the hand that supplied her with comforts; that the knowledge of his kindness had comforted her on her dying bed.

'And oh, sir,' continued the elf, 'I used to say that if ever I could get away to be honest I'd search the wide world till I found you, to serve you, to shield you from every danger.'

He looked down at the tiny figure that offered to protect him, and a smile crept over his face. But it was not a satirical smile. There was nothing satirical about the man, though he had lived to suffer when youth and love were strong, though wealth and fame had come upon him,

together with premature old age and a desolate heart. His smile was like himself—kindly, gentle, and genial; it lightened with a pleasant light a face naturally noble, rendered still more noble by suffering; deeply seamed and furrowed, with the broad intellectual brow, the deep clear grey eyes that had no false glitter lurking in their depths. His mouth had not lost the mobile expression of sweetness that had rested on it when youth was at its brightest, when the future seemed so heavy laden with honours, not cares, with dignities, not stumbling-blocks.

‘I know I’m very small, sir,’ said Jenny deprecatingly, and looking humbly at herself as though her hands and feet were something very wicked indeed to account for; ‘but I would give my whole life to serve you. I would, indeed, for you loved my mother.’

It never struck her that she pained him; that she was compelling his dead to walk forth from their resting-places in their ghastly cerements; that she was bringing him face to face with a past that could never be recalled, save in such mocking phantom guise, a past upon which he had manfully turned his back long ago. He did not permit her to see it, only the brightness faded out of his smile, leaving but the kindly gentleness.

‘I think you would,’ he said, comprehending by some wondrous sympathy how much there was of good and noble in this poor untutored girl. Some magnetism, some marvellous clairvoyance, not given to the common herd, told him that struggling, stumbling all her life, she had yet some divine conception of a light beyond.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW THE VAGRANTS ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN ROSS, AND  
HOW THEY LEFT IT.

SIX months had come and gone. Six months of unremitting toil, privation, struggling, to the two little outcasts, who were—never mind how slowly, how laboriously—winning for themselves a name and fame as members of the honest poor.

The honest poor. Where shall we find genius to embalm in idyllic verse the surpassing beauty of their lives? Where shall we find an epic poem worthy of their self-sacrifice, their heroism, their grandeur of design, and faithfulness of execution; not showing out as the sensational event against a background of commonplace self-indulgence, but daily, hourly, interwoven with their simplest actions and meanest duties?

The battle was not over. Oh, no, nothing like. It was not even much easier than when Jenny had fought it single-handed in the Dublin attic. But they never gave in, never would know when they were beaten, these two ignorant children from the Thieves' Latin.

But an epic should have victories and triumphs as well as sacrifices and noble deeds. And think you it was no triumph when from a suspicious townspeople, out of the very teeth of a gaunt starvation, they had wrenched money to pay for two new dresses to go to church in? Think you it was no victory worth recording, when the simple, kindly grey-haired minister found his way to the bare bleak home

of his new parishioners, and spoke to them as though they had never been thieves and the children of thieves ?

Neither when work was slack or when work was plenty could the painter prevail on Miss Joice to accept the smallest aid. The indomitable resolution might be pride or might be principle, but it was not to be shaken. Mr. Dalzell had come and gone many a time, but he never came without seeking out the attic where sat the two patient workers. Think you it was nothing to be proud of, that this gentleman, whose charity they would not accept, was content to come as a friend, to do them what good he might in quiet, unostentatious fashion, as though they were real ladies ? And that good was no little, for every new idea, every noble principle, every grand lesson fell into hungry little ears, craving for a light and knowledge they had never heard of by some mysterious instinct of an immortal nature.

He wanted to pay for tuition at night, that they might be able to fight their battle without such fearful odds against them ; but they forestalled him in their humble fashion. A couple of pence per week gained them admission to a night-school kept by a wooden-legged veteran, and no argument would induce them to change to a more expensive establishment.

It was very pleasant when, as now, the nature of their employment allowed the two vagrants—vagrants no longer—to sit together. Coarse work it was, and not over well paid, but its reward was independence ; and the thin fingers sewed away without flagging, while the busy brains went over and over the nightly lessons.

‘ Bid, b-i-d ; bide, b-i-d-e ; funny, isn’t it ? ’

‘ Sure it’s funny, entirely,’ said Miss Joice ; ‘ an’ if it wasn’t that it’s so respectable to read, I’d pitch the book

at that old man. It's not enough for him to have a wooden leg, but he must have a wooden head too. He wants to make out that p-h is f, and that he didn't tell me flat the other night that r-e-a-d spells read, and now he wants me to know it's red.'

'I wish I could remember all he says,' sighed Kate hopelessly.

'How could you, when he says one thing one time and another thing another? It's more nor he can do himself.'

'Do you think I'll ever read, Jenny?'

'You? Of course. It'll come natural to you, and I'm bound to do it, 'cos I must.'

'Conning your lessons?' said a pleasant voice.

They had not known Mr. Dalzell intended to return to Ross. He had not, however, many minutes to spare; a grand exhibition of magic lantern was to be given to the school children at the town hall that night, and he wanted his two little friends to come too.

What a night that was! Mr. Dalzell was the chief promoter of the treat, and at the request of the committee said a few words to the children on the last view—a scene from the Holy Land, which he had visited not long before. He took out his watch and laid it on the table before him, giving himself just five minutes. But, somehow, talking to those eager-faced children was pleasanter work than he had anticipated. He warmed with the subject, and forgot not only the time but the watch.

He summoned the two little workers to the platform when the room was cleared, intending to explain to curious Jenny some of the wonderful things that evidently puzzled her. He thought this very desultory sort of education might be better than none; but just as he had begun, a

gentleman leaving town next morning button-holed him, and drew him outside the large room. He told the girls to wait till he should return, and they stood there patiently, though everyone else had gone.

They were not tired ; they had so much to talk about, these wondering children.

‘It’s queer we don’t see them,’ Jenny said, in a puzzled tone, ‘such big things as they were, right from here to there.’

She stopped—her eyes, her hand, transfixed in the direction of the window. The light had been turned up after the last view, and plain as in daylight was that face set in the window to Jenny’s gaze. It was a smooth, oily face, with a malicious grin, slimy and slippery.

‘Jenny, what is it ?’

Without a word Jenny darted forward to the open window.

‘He’s gone round to the door. Quick, Kate !’

‘Who ? What ?’

‘Up here, and drop down quiet ; then run for your life.’

She had already drawn a bench under the window, and pushed Kate up.

‘Mind you run. I’ll keep him here, and if I don’t go to you, manage without.’

She pushed the girl out, fastened the window, and stood with her back to it, as the Otter reached the open door.

‘Where’s the other ?’ he demanded, grasping his daughter’s arm securely.

She did not answer, but looked defiantly at him.

‘Ye won’t, eh ? Well, I’ve got you, and let him look out for his girl.’

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'Father,' she said, almost for the first time in her life, 'leave me here. What do you want me back for?'

'Leave you? Leave you to him?' he hissed, a cruel look indenting the slimy face. 'Didn't I see him, and don't I know him? Oh, I'll pay him out for taking you from your father. I'll make him rue it.'

'Him take me? You're mad. I came away myself.'

'Well, you won't stay. Come on.'

'Oh, father!' and no rebellious defiance marked the pain inflicted by his stern grip, 'let me be; sure I'm no use to you, and I'm so comfortable here. Let me stay among honest people, and be one of them; don't take me back to the Thieves' Latin. I pray for you every day and every night, but I couldn't do it there. And oh, it's so hard to get a footin'; don't drag me back, or I'd never have the heart to begin all over again.'

'Stop yer palaver, and come on. D'ye think the fellow that worked at the same clay models as me, that made my wife grumble at her husband 'cos he didn't wheedle the money out of people's pockets so fine—d'ye think I'm going to let him convert you too?' he hissed, his face disfigured with the envy of a mean, low nature, goaded to madness by the thought of another's good fortune. He who had squandered all his good gifts, his precious youth, with a reckless hand, was not only dissatisfied with the returns in the shape of self-indulgences, but was furious that he was not still as rich as the man whose life had been one long, sometimes bitter lesson of self-denial.

The pleading look gave way to one the Otter had been more accustomed to in the old days—a defiant hate, a burning rage.

'I tell you, Joe Joice, it's better for ye to let me go. I'll



curse you every hour of my life, mind that. I'll make you rue the day you ever saw me.'

'Will ye come, or will I go with ye home to yer lodgin's? Will I go to-morrow to every shop in the town and warn them again' Jenny Joice, the Otter's daughter? They'll trust ye afther that, eh?'

'Eighteen months toiling and struggling for this!' she moaned, as she wrung her hands in passionate despair.

He drew her across the room, but not to the door, to the table, where lay the watch.

'Not that. I'll scream for help if ye killed me.'

'Do. Inform; it's all that's wantin'.'

When Mr. Dalzell returned he found the hall empty. He had instructed the man in attendance not to clear the things away until he should call, which he did now, concluding the two girls had become tired of waiting. Remembering his watch, he went to the table. It was not there; it was not under it, nor in fact anywhere about. A search was instituted, until at last Mr. Dalzell began to think Kate or Jenny must have taken it for safety. This was the only conclusion he could come to, for the man who waited to put out the lights had been employed in a back office the whole time he had been there speaking to Mr. Townley.

It was late next day when he mounted the narrow stairs to the attic, where he found neither Kate nor Jenny, but a weak-eyed landlady who began to whine piteously at the sight of the gentleman.

'Where are your lodgers?' he ejaculated.

'Where, indeed? That's just what I'd like to know;

and sorra a day's notice, much less a week, and me a lone widdy.'

'They're not gone. When? How?'

'They're just gone, sir. The witch never came back at all at all; and t'other she raced in like mad, and bundled me the week's rent, like she's scared out of her life, and never a word of notice, only off wid her.'

'Did she say nothing—leave nothing?'

'Sorra a thing but what you see,' and the whine increased alarmingly, 'and sure I thought that'd be for the notice, and me a lone widdy.'

That was all Mr. Dalzell heard of his watch. That was all Ross saw of the two vagrants. Owing to the search on the previous evening, it was soon widely circulated, in spite of the painter, that the black-eyed witch had run away with his watch.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### MRS. CHIRRUP'S REMORSE.

A CHANGE had come to Flossy Ingram, a change that was perceptible to everyone except Lord Ingram, but that was so plain to no one as to Mrs. Chirrup. To her it was startling, awful, terrible. By day she brooded and by night she wept over it. It took all the flavour out of her life, all the sweetness out of her length of days, and left her only the nauseous choking ashes.

If Flossy Ingram had grown a hard unscrupulous intriguante, who was to blame? If the nobility and ten-

derness of her nature had degenerated into rank injustice and despicable weakness, who was to blame? If all her proud resolution had developed into relentless hardness, her cleverness into despicable schemes, her pretty childish frivolity into an awful disregard of the laws of God and man, her love for admiration into a cruel determination to keep it at any cost, who was to blame? Who, but the one whose sinful vehemence had nipped the girl's good resolutions in the bud, whose earthly idolatry had permitted her recklessly to implant the seeds of evil in a young soul?

Oh, the remorse of those bitter miserable days to the silver-haired fairy of Rosehill! Oh, the bitterness of her repentance for those passionate words that had done so much incurable mischief!

- ♥ Incurable? Was there then no way in which she could appeal to this girl who had only too blindly obeyed her wishes? None, none. She could not bring herself to accuse her godchild of an indistinct yet palpable crime, she herself being the direct instigator of that crime, or rather the cause, for in her passion she had said so much more than she had meant, so much more than she ever could mean.

Ah! but it is not so much what we mean but what we say, and not what we say but what we imply; a truth that Mrs. Chirrup was learning now, sorely against her will.

Yes, a change had come upon Miss Ingram—a change that some were slow to comprehend, but that everybody felt. And Rohan Blennerhasset was not slower of perception than the everybodies. Have I not said he prided himself above all things on his keen penetration? have I not said that he was wont to drag forth from their hiding-places the motives of men, and flinging aside the veil of

actions, reveal them in all their hideous deformity? How, then, should he fail to see that which was plain to the world?

He did see it, and it puzzled him sorely. Yes, though according to his reasoning it was the most natural thing for a flirt to show herself completely heartless in all things as in one. He had told himself over and over that Miss Ingram was just the frivolous, self-pampered creature to fall when temptation came, that she was a woman with just sufficient cleverness to sin well, but not sufficient depth to be capable of genuine remorse, that she was as incapable of any great sacrifice to abstract principle as she was of any deep feeling for anything not purely sensual.

Why, then, should he be surprised at what he saw going on daily, at doings which gave him a key no one else possessed to the sudden change in the heiress of Ingram, as she still was, and was evidently determined she should be? Why should he be surprised that this woman, whose shallow nature he had read in one night, whose life had been one unbroken lesson of self-indulgence, should become a plotter, a conspirator, a colleague of the scum of a police station, an author of vile plans to be carried out by viler people, that she should debase herself to the ranks of the unscrupulously dishonest, that she should put aside pity, mercy for the orphan, all sense of justice towards those who had right on their side, when such a line of conduct became necessary to preserve her position intact?

Oh, the vile plotting! oh, the base schemes! oh, the degradation of the companionship necessary to bring those plots and schemes to their horrid perfection! But why should he be surprised?

And yet the man was illogical enough to be very much surprised, though he was still more astonished at himself for being so. Had she thrown her glamour over his senses as well as his heart? Had she bewitched him with her golden hair and shining eyes and shell-tinted cheeks?

Why had this horrid knowledge come to him? Why had he not been allowed to preserve the little faith he had had in her? or, else, why was he not content to believe all evil of her as well as other women? He had not sought this knowledge, it had come to him, it continued coming, it would come in spite of him, and grew and spread until it became the very Upas tree of his life.

In the saloons of the great, Beatrice Ingram once more asserted her position as the heiress, the baroness to be. With a haughty, cold scorn, that sat with a strange charm on her fair young face, she flung back with interest the premature slights of those who had treated her as deposed. With chilling disdain she received their covert apologies, a disdain that shone out visibly even in the smiles with which she lured them on to pour out their treasures for her amusement, to make themselves greater fools than ever to atone for having been wise too soon, to turn themselves into dancing dervishes, and romping philosophers, and hoyden preachers, and tolerant bigots, for the sweet sake of her whom they had been ready to trample on and spit at a few weeks before; in the rampant contempt that ran riot in her mirth, her witticisms, her biting sarcasms, in her imperious demands upon their riches and time and talents and patience.

Oh, the close of the season was better than the beginning, and it grew brighter and brighter for the heiress of Ingram, as no breath reached the great world of any

chance of her reign being shaken. The impostor, 'bare-faced thing,' and the madman with the mad story, were things of the past, and were forgotten, as it was only polite to Miss Ingram they should be, buried in the hearts of these exemplary Christians, to be revived at the first fitting opportunity.

And Miss Ingram? Well, she enjoyed herself, never better. Never in the first flush of her entrance into a fascinating society, had she so thoroughly enjoyed herself as now, amongst those people whom she so heartily despised. Great Heaven! what amusement, what pleasure they afforded her, what stores of intellect and research they opened to her, what wealth of good things they displayed for her benefit, with what reckless profusion they scattered their riches before her; these people who would not have stretched out their little fingers had they suspected her of wanting their aid.

Oh, she had learnt to know them well in a little time. How her eyes had been opened under the cloud, how her sight had been sharpened, her perception quickened. How she had been made to realise what she had known before. In two short months she had been slighted and slurred, lovers had forgotten, friends had remembered with pious horror the unprincipled creature who had passed herself off as an heiress, and her uncle's child alive. Oh, how she knew them, and how she despised them.


How she used them, and how she abused them, though. How she flirted with eligibles, and raised distracting hopes in the bosoms of younger sons, and laughed out her merry contempt at themselves and their charming mothers who for two whole months had been in a fevered agony, lest Fred should possibly 'cast a thought on that wretched

snub-nosed girl, who had nothing to recommend her, nothing at all, my dear,' or whether Frank ran the risk of still being 'subjected to the shameless wiles of that unscrupulous husband-hunter, who would marry anyone, anyone, positively, dear, that would have her'—a statement easy of belief, if referring to anyone guilty of laying traps for the said Frank.

How she used them, and how she abused them. How she showered her smiles and encouragement on delightful mothers and dutiful sons, and played with them as a cat plays with a mouse, and pleased them just enough to make the succeeding indifferent hauteur, or stinging banter properly galling. How she stretched her exactions to the utmost limit, then receded with a mocking smile of thanks for their imbecile complaisance.

Enjoy herself? I should think so. And as I have said, never had she enjoyed herself so much. It was little wonder, after all, that she should, seeing that she was the most charming girl in the Viceregal court; for she never suffered her ever visible disdain to become offensive, except when it suited her; it seemed rather to give an enchanting piquancy to her beauty. But if she had? Was she not still heiress of Ingram?

But she was a very charming young woman. Her contempt was so good-humoured; her disdain was so royally careless of stooping to offend anyone in particular; her satire was so bright as well as sharp, that it was no wonder she held high carnival, and reigned, a genuine queen of slavish subjects, in glaring contrast to the deputy one at the Castle. The superb scorn that flashed from her eyes was yet so redolent of pleasure that it was no marvel if its beauty compensated for its sting. Her bitterest



mockery was such perfect gaiety, such frolicking fun, that it is nothing surprising it should have entranced those who suffered most by it, and bewitched them by its magic. At least there was one thing constant about this young lady, so capriciously fickle in other respects—she always seemed to enjoy herself. Flattering or repulsing, showering her contempt from the corner of her polished shaft, or flinging it in a broadside of merriment, she always seemed to get the good out of life. And this splendid capacity for enjoyment was in itself an indescribable charm to weary world-worshippers, who had either never had it, or had had it ground out of them long ago by Mrs. Grundy's heel. It was delicious to hear those in the latter predicament rave against the good woman for what she had done; never reflecting that Mrs. Grundy never does, never can go out of her way to grind anything out of anybody; that it is utterly impossible for her to trample on any, save those who throw themselves under her feet. She is, doubtless, an unwieldy and corpulent female, but that is her misfortune, not her fault. That she should tread heavily is a natural result of her condition, but if people will take a substantial dame for a pirouetting ballet-dancer, they have no right to complain of a crash in the boards.

Yes, the most charming, the most admired, the most brilliant at the Viceregal court; and well she appreciated the goods the gods had given her. Side by side with her unbroken gaiety was her perfect appreciation of the good things of this life, material and abstract.

Yet she had serious hours, this bright young lady, whose careless gaiety bewildered the good old city, and



deprived stately dowagers of their breath. You wouldn't have taken her for the belle of the Irish court (ay, and the most defiant belle too), had you seen her walking under the shadow of the dark avenue in Phoenix Park, side by side with a celestial-nosed man, to whom she talked neither flippantly, nor gaily, nor derisively, but soberly and seriously, ay, anxiously. You would not have taken her for the daintiest lady in Dublin town, had you seen her dull heavy dress, her muffled shawl, her thick veil. You would not have taken her for the most frivolous butterfly in Dublin town, had you heard the earnest voice asking—

‘Then you have no trace yet?’

‘Nay, nay, ma’am; I didn’t say that, exactly. I was only at the beginning.’

‘Then tell me the end first.’

‘Well, ma’am, as I was saying——’

‘No, no, no there, don’t begin there. Have you got any clue?’

‘Well, I believe a trifle.’

‘Then we are on the track,’ she exclaimed in a tone of passionate exultation. ‘After all these months of waiting and working we are on the track.’

‘You go so fast, ma’am. I’m sure I never said that.’

‘Well, well, go on. I have patience now I know there is something to wait for.’

‘As I was saying, I’d got to Thomastown, I think?’

‘Past, I’m sure.’

‘No, ma’am, because it was at Thomastown station I first caught sight of her.’

‘Ah!’

'She was standing under a gas lamp with a parcel, and I was here, just as if you was her and I was myself.'

'Yes, well?'

'She stood for more nor twenty minutes just like a patient statue, and them great eyes of hers flared unnatural-like at eleven o'clock at the night. Well, she waited till the up-train was near starting; then she run with the parcel to a lady, and I'm blessed if the lady didn't forget to pay her. Law, ma'am, you never in your life saw anything like the look of the girl's white face as she watched the train go past.'

'Horrid creature!'

'Well, I follered her, for I felt a'most sure it was her.'

'Why didn't you take her?'

'That was the first time ever I saw her, and if I made a mistake, and clapped hands on a respectable party as maybe had a father, why explanations would be okkard.'

'Yes, very.'

'You told me whatever I did was, beyond all things, to be done quietly,' he continued, aggrieved at the question.

'You are quite right,' she said petulantly. 'Well, you followed her?'

'Yes, and she was that suspicious that I do believe she felt it, for when I called at the place to make enquiries, I heard all I wanted and a little more. She was the identical party no doubt, and she had packed up her traps and gone.'

'Gone?'

'Clean gone. Well, I didn't catch a glimpse of her again till last night.'

'So late as that?' and the lady almost gasped for breath. 'Then you know where to put your hand upon her?'

‘Indeed, I don’t. I tell you what, she’s a sly customer. She slipped away somewhere, but not by the door, out of the shop as I stepped in; and up to the counter I went, seeing her gone.

“‘You know that young woman?’” says I.

“‘I do, maybe,’” says the female; for them draper girls is awful for cheek.

“‘She comes often here?’” I says.

“‘Every day in the year, barrin’ when she stays away;” and that’s the way she went on till I was near driv crazy, and all I found out was that the girl got work there. I ’spect that was all that young female knew, for all she’d look so mighty wise, for I never see the woman I couldn’t pump dry. Well, I made up my mind to nab her the very next night—not in the shop, to make a talk, you know, my lady, but just outside. Well, as I got to the door I see a skirt whisk away, and a figure running for dear life. I run too, for I felt if I didn’t my game was up. She’d bin listening all the time. But, law, she run like wings, she did. I put a bold face on it, and went straight back to the shop, and told the cheeky young female that the young party as wasn’t cheeky, but awful sly, was wanted partiklar, and I got the whereabouts of the lodgings out of her. But when I got there the bird had flown, herself and t’other girl.’

‘What other girl?’

‘The one as lives with her, and puts her up to all this devilry. “The witch” they call her.’

‘Well, and now?’ said the young lady despondingly.

‘Well, now, ma’am, we’re as far off as ever, and all we’ve got to do is to begin again.’

‘Very well, begin again; and begin again a hundred

times over before you give in, for find her I will. Good gracious! only last night, you say?'

'Last night, ma'am; and I've been working ever since.'

'Work on, work on. You know the conditions of success, and it is worth your while to try as well as mine. Work on, I tell you; and if your heart fails give place to a braver man; but ended the search cannot be till I have her safe. I am playing for a great stake, and I will not be balked. I tell you if you were to search for years she must be found. I can never know rest or peace till she is.'

'I understand, my lady.'

'You understand nothing at all about it,' she interrupted with imperious hauteur; 'but I told you to serve me well and give me news of the very first scent, for I must be in at the death.'

The detective never flagged, and, if he had, she would have goaded him on. He was certainly the cleverest man in his line, and she had sense enough to see that through his defeats; and so her life went on, divided into those brilliant meteor-lighted hours devoted to society, and cautious interviews with the detective, and grave, silent, serious times when she communed with herself, or studied the face of Mrs. Chirrup and the whitening head of her uncle.

And all the time Rohan Blennerhasset's suspicions and Mrs. Chirrup's remorse and the detective's admiration deepened.

'Not only frivolous, but wicked,' groaned the lawyer, strangely pained by the confession.

'I have done it all,' moaned Mrs. Chirrup.

'Ah, but she's a deep one,' the detective muttered, walking briskly about like a man who hadn't a minute to

spare to attend to anybody's business but his own, and all the time taking accurate measurement of each one he met.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE LITTLE NURSES.

THE great king had come in awful majesty to levy his terrible dues. Men fell before him like ripe wheat before the sickle. Clothed in the terrors of the Cholera he came, breaking those who would not bend, compelling young men and old, maids and matrons, rich and poor, crowned kings and blue blood grandees, practical artisans and debased paupers, to do homage to his dread presence. He came to the gorgeous palaces of the land, and there was weeping beside purple palls and wax tapers, and great men and women wept one or two of their cherished idols, and all the world wept with them; he came to the lonely cabin where the solitary tree defended the frail roof from the tempest, and there was mourning beside a father, a helper, an only one, stretched on a bed of straw, and the poor man and woman wept the household stay, the orphan's dependence, and no one knew that they wept at all.

He came to the alley in Dromore, where the now lonely worker had come to be near Jenny, in defiance of all danger; and he came to the Latin, where the caged bird beat feebly its wounded wings and looked helplessly at the open door. He struck with his mighty hand, breathed with his pestiferous breath, to the right and to the left, sparing few whom he looked upon, yet passing by one here

and one there. Thousands lay dying in the town of Dro-more, thousands more in the outlying suburbs, in the festering lanes, in the densely-crowded hospitals.

‘It is terrible to see them,’ Jenny said, forgetting her misery in this universal calamity, which had not deterred her from bringing oranges to a sick child in a hospital. ‘Poor things, they lie and toss and moan, and it’s as much as the nurses and doctors can do to give them a drink in the twenty-four hours. If they had anyone to lift their poor heads now and again, and look after their medicine, some might get better ; but as it is, what can they do but die ?’

Jenny did not exaggerate. The hospitals were but chambers of one great lazar-house, a morgue for the living, out of which bodies yet warm had to be thrown on stretchers in the vaults below, whence they would be carted, a dozen at a time, to satiated burying grounds. And though hardly any of the nurses had permitted panic to interfere with their terrible duties, though they had seen their numbers thin without additional defection, yet in spite of a heroism, none the less great that it was evinced by the nameless, the obscure, the attendance was woefully insufficient.

‘Poor things, poor things!’ repeated Kate compassionately. ‘I would like to help nurse them ; do you think they would let me ?’

‘No, no ; I’m sure they wouldn’t,’ Jenny said hastily. ‘You’d be sure to catch it.’

‘You weren’t afraid to go.’

‘I’m stronger than you ; besides, I’m only going to do it to spite *him*. It’s just the one thing he’s afraid of, an’ I’ll give him enough of it.’

‘Are you going to be a nurse?’

‘Well, yes; but I wasn’t intending to tell you. However, I may as well say good-bye; but if I catch it don’t you fret, it’ll only serve me right, you know.’

‘You needn’t say good-bye, Jenny, because I’m coming.’

There was a look of resolution on the pale thin face that alarmed Jenny.

‘No, you’re not,’ she said almost fiercely. ‘I’d tell Balfe first.’

‘You wouldn’t do that, and it would be a comfort to me to be of use to somebody before I die. It’s always miserable I made people all my life, and I’d like to think I done some good.’

‘There you go; you’re sure to catch it.’

‘Why aren’t you afraid for yourself?’

‘Me afraid?’ said Jenny bitterly, ‘and for what would I be afraid! What better could happen me than to catch it, and die quick instead of slow, to die away from this life of shame and misery? Which is better, that or to go on, not living, but with the heart gnawing out of me all the day, all the night; to go on sinking lower and lower, till at last it’s that I am?’

She pointed as she spoke to a woman emerging from a whiskey shop. A woman—but not in the likeness of a woman—a thing of abject wretchedness, and degradation, the shivering figure draped in rags, the face bloated and purple, swollen almost out of the semblance of humanity with drink.

Kate shivered. ‘Not like that, Jenny.’

‘Why not? Oh, it’s easy for the rich and the respectable, who know nothing of what it is to be made wicked,

who sin from sheer wantonness, from the very choice of their hearts, and in defiance of the safe hedges Heaven has put round them, to throw a hard word on such a wretch as that. It's easier, sure, for them to stone her in the mire than give her a hand out of it. Do you think I learnt nothing all that time, that cruel time, before you found me in the rushes? Do you think I didn't see and hate the righteous horror people a thousand times worse have for such as that woman? But why shouldn't she drink? What else was she brought up to? what other comfort has she from the birth to the grave, from the cradle to the coffin? And why shouldn't I become the same? What's to hinder? What one pleasure will I have from this hour to the hour of my death? So you see, my dear, it wouldn't much matter if I died while I've fewer sins to answer for than I'll have in a few years' time. With you it's different.'

'How different?' said the girl mournfully. 'What is my life to me more than yours? Why would I be sorry to die? What would I do without you? We'll go together, Jenny.'

They did go together. The porter stared at them as if he thought they must be mad, then whispered their mission to a nurse who was passing. She glanced hastily at the two small figures, and shook her head; but the waifs from the Latin were not to be discouraged in what they looked upon as the first good thing they had tried to do. Then the doctor came down.

It was Dr. Dalzell, who had been moved from his old post to superintend St. Anne's.

'So you want to be nurses, do you?' and he knit his



beetle brows. 'Perhaps you don't know that cholera means death?'

'Yes, we know,' said Jenny; 'but it don't matter.'

'Eh? Why? Yes. You haven't been to the river again?'

'No, sir, never; though I'm sure I don't know why I wasn't. We can come?'

'Please, sir, let us come;' and the thin face and the wistful grey eyes looked up at him appealingly. 'We want to help; we'll be very good to the poor people, that's worse off than us.'

'Are they worse off than you?' he asked, glancing doubtfully at the thin shawl, the thinner gown whose many rents were decently sewn now.

'Yes, sir. Sure they're more wretched than us; that's why we want to help.'

A divine pity for those who were poorer than herself gave her a superb courage, and she spoke fearlessly, not shrinkingly or tremulously. The gruff physician was awed.

'Come in, children. I dare not refuse your aid. He who sent you will keep you, doubtless.'

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE OTTER GETS THE SHIVERS.

THE Otter no longer feared that Jenny would run away. He thought she had had enough of it: that after the theft sure to be affixed to her, she would hardly have the courage

to begin a fresh struggle for honesty. Her frequent absences, therefore, did not surprise him, even when she was away all day, and only returned late at night, disappearing at three and four in the morning. No suspicion as to where she was troubled him; for, impregnated with the popular belief that cholera was contagious, he had given her strictest orders to let no pity, no compassion, induce her to approach any unfortunate sufferer.

It was this man's dread that he should die in his bed. He had braved death in many forms in the Channel, often, too, for a very trifling prize—a few shillings profit on a keg of whiskey, a roll of tobacco, etc. Not only the death resulting from the enemy's shot had he dared, but the shameful one administered by Jack Ketch. And the thought of having braved and escaped all these dangers, only to fall a victim to a cruel disease, absolutely sickened him. He was not devoid of courage, even Bully Balfe never accused him of that; yet when he thought of the cholera a panic seized him, and he quaked like the veriest coward.

And somehow to-night he could think of nothing else. Jobs were scarce the last few days, perhaps because Balfe was away from Dromore; but he had one in prospect to-night. It was not, however, of sufficient importance to divert his thoughts from the horrid spectacles he had witnessed that day.

The ghostly clock clicked in the corner, the damp chill on the dilapidated furniture was damper and chiller than ever. The cold earth floor was cleanly swept, but there was a smell of death from it that pervaded the place like the odour from a grave newly opened.

The Shivers always had something ghostly about it, but

to-night it seemed as if all the shapes Jenny Joy had ever seen and imagined had come into visible being, resting shadowily yet palpably on the frail unpainted chairs, nestling behind the dresser with its scant crockery-ware, lurking under the table, peeping out at the Otter from the fitful flashes of the fire that wouldn't burn brightly, and that would crackle with an unearthly sound, in spite of several persistent attempts to prevent it, with an air that said, 'I am damp and spiritual, and I won't burn, and I will crackle in spite of you.'

'It's my belief that you are damp, bad scran to you,' said the Otter in reply. 'It's damp you are and damp you will be till you're burnt to ashes, drat you. But why should you, you mortal humbug? Didn't I take your timbers out of a river, you say? Thru; but didn't I dry you since that, you log of ingratitude? Wait—I'll make you burn.'

He got up and approached the dresser, and from the lower part he took a small wooden box. After breaking it up, he smeared the pieces with oil, and placed them in the grate. There was a flare up; then the fire flickered and crackled as hopelessly as ever. Damp, damp, nothing but damp, even in the fire.

'I wonder where's the witch?' he remarked, smoking his dudeen, and resigning himself to the prevailing influences. 'She's like a sperit, an' as hard to manage; but, bother it, I wish she was back; she's the only thing in the place that's not damp, and even her eerie eyes are better glaring into a fellow than these damp walls. I wonder is there any damp in the other place? Say not; but wouldn't wonder if they get up a mildewed corner for my especial benefit.'

Damper and damper the place seemed to grow, and the ghostly shapes glided and rustled about, dancing weird dances to the dismal music of the wind that was soughing through the leafless trees outside, till the Otter could bear it no longer; and rising from before the fire, that grew dimmer and duller every moment, he sought among the ghostly shapes in the dresser, and after a vigorous struggle rescued from them a thick bull-necked jar.

The Otter was no coward, yet a creeping fear came over him, as the wind howled in madder mirth around the crazy building, piercing every crank and cranny, making the shapes on the wall, on the floor, on the roof, skip and disport themselves in wilder ecstasy. He had always listened without any disbelief to his daughter's goblin legends, but had never feared them. To-night he tried to disbelieve, and his doubt was tinctured with dread, though with characteristic audacity he strove to shake it from him. Taking a pull at the jar, he seized a sudden resolution, and looked round defiantly.

'Bad luck to ye, spirits, ghosts, whatever ye are, come on. What can ye do? Who's afraid of you? I do believe in you, and I don't care for ye not the snap of my fingers. But, bad cess to you, come forward plain—not like men, for ye can't, but like ghosts and spirits—and don't stay creeping about enough to make the flesh crawl on my bones.'

Eerie musical laughter answered him as the door flew open, admitting a tiny figure and a tremendous gust of sleet, that somehow made the Otter shiver as he never remembered shivering before.

'Well, I called the place Shivery Arbour, but I never thought *I'd* shiver in the damp, that's as natural to me as dew to the cabbage-leaf. Where were you?'

The question was addressed to Miss Joice, who only laughed again, a bitter, malicious laugh.

'So ye're creepin' at last, are ye? I told you *they* were here, and they are so, sure enough;' and she nodded familiarly to the shapes that peered at her with a weird welcome.

'It's something not right there is about you,' he remarked, as he noted the glitter of her black eyes, the elfin laugh that jarred upon him to-night as gratingly as though he were a gentleman of the most ultra-refined tastes and hypercritical ear.

She had taken off the wet cloak and shoes, and thrusting her feet into slippers that were so big she had to drag them after her, sat down opposite her father. There was something very unearthly in her appearance as she sat there on that low stool, her body bent forward, her elbows resting on her knees, her two small hands supporting the thin, sharp face, her glittering eyes, suddenly grown solemn, peering intently into the fire, as if seeking there some necromantic legend. More child than woman, more spirit than either. Again the Otter shivered, though the door was closed now, and a strange restlessness took possession of him.

'Where were you this hour of the night?' he asked again, oppressed by the silence. No answer came.

'That's your manners, is it? It's yerself is the dutiful daughter.' He would have been glad of an excuse to fight.

'Dutiful is it?' exclaimed Miss Joice, with momentary bitterness, 'but it's you has the right to duty and manners, save the mark. It's dutiful and mannerly yer wor  
her that's gone, morya.' Then she relapsed into her

abstraction, dwindling and dwindling with the flickering fire into something so shadowy, so unreal, that she only seemed one of the many shapes springing out of the darkness.

‘Ye look as if ye’d gone to inform, and couldn’t get the price for the job. Come, out with it, Jenny.’

‘An’ why wouldn’t I?’ she said, turning on him savagely. ‘What were all the wrongs you ever done me to this? For near eighteen months I slaved and fought for an honest name. Oh, I lived a life that wasn’t pleasant and that wasn’t easy; oh, no, it wasn’t easy, the life I lived to get an honest name; and I got it, yes, I got it, thief as you brought me up, I got it. But I can never have it again—no, never. You’ve took from me what you can never in all your wretched life give me back—no, not if you tried ever so hard; for if you did tell the truth, who’d believe you? Isn’t it all over the country this minit how Jenny Joice run away from Ross with the gentleman’s watch, that was so kind to her? Isn’t it in Mr. Dalzell’s heart that the girl he was so good to, oh, so good—that he tried to make something of, witch and all as she was—was foolin’ him all the time?’ I might try for another eighteen months to be honest, and you mightn’t, maybe, find me, but where would I get another friend like him? And worse than all, how would I make him believe me again? Oh, you’ve done what you can never undo, an’ I’ll never, never forgive you.’

It was a speech she remembered long after, long after it had ceased to trouble him, a speech whose passionate, revengeful bitterness lingered when what had caused it was forgotten. So it is. We forget what made us so cruel, so vindictive—we only remember that we were so

And if the cause occurs to us, refined by the truth of time, what a little thing it seems to have warranted those poisonous words, those stinging taunts.

There was silence again. Jenny relapsed into her reverie. The Otter gave up fighting his daughter, to fight against the dismal depression that weighed him down, by recalling his many humorous tricks, his comical evasions of the law, his long career in which he had so daringly outwitted the custom-house officials, and in many cases literally snapped his fingers in their faces. It was an employment congenial to his ideas of the ludicrous, and yet to-night the chuckle would not come. At length he pushed back his chair with as much noise as possible, and took down from its peg the coat that had replaced the one Jenny had abstracted that Saturday night. Miss Joice watched him furtively while he shook it, as though to free it from the all-prevailing damp.

‘It may be what you call tidiness to set a man’s coat agin a wet wall,’ he remarked, ‘but it’s what I call spite, and tarnal mean spite too.’

‘Where are you going?’ Miss Joice asked.

‘Out it’s likely.’

‘On a job?’

‘An’ what if it is? Would you like to starve?’

‘Don’t go out,’ she said, with an earnestness that caused him to stare blankly at her. ‘Don’t. If you saw the deaths I saw to-day, you’d not care to go.’

A new horror paled the slimy face.

‘Where have ye been?’ he gasped. ‘Not—not in the houses where there’s sick?’

‘No, in the hospital.’

‘What brought ye there, ye imp of the evil one?’ he

exclaimed furiously, recoiling as he spoke. 'Answer me, or I'll kill ye by inches.'

The solemn gentleness died out of the girl's face, leaving only hard, bitter defiance.

'No ye won't. I'm not as easy killed as my mother.'

'It's a conspiracy, is it? Who's at the bottom of it? Who bribed you to bring the plague to me?—tell me that,' and he approached her with uplifted hand, and a look on his face she had never seen before. All the good was gone now, all the evil in the girl's nature was stirred by the threatening gesture and fierce words.

'Take care,' she said mockingly; 'it's in my clothes it is, maybe.'

Again he drew back.

'Take them off and burn them, you jade you; and if ever I hear of ye going to that place again, I'll shoot you down like a mad dog.'

'It was awful to see Jack Buckle raving like one; him that used to be so strong. It would be worth your while to see him now, with his livid face, and oaths that would make your flesh creep,' she said with malicious emphasis.

If she had known that these would be the last words he would ever hear her speak, would she, even with all her cruel sense of wrong, have spoken them?

The man flung himself out of reach of the witch-like accents, and Miss Joice left the Shivers that night for good.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## DIED UNFORGIVEN.

ALL the wards were cholera wards now. Not a few of the nurses sickened and died; but no pang of fear kept the two outcasts from the Thieves' Latin from gliding incessantly from one pallet to the other, ministering quietly, obeying the doctor with scrupulous precision that rendered their services more valuable than those of experienced hands. Nobody could tell when they slept, but it was wonderful how they held up against every fatigue and terror, these two young girls; wonderful into what beauty their characters developed; how the fiery, bitter, vixenish Jenny became gentle to the most obstinate and ungracious, melting in warm, compassionate sympathy over their sufferings; how the timid coward Kate grew bold, firm with the most refractory patients, fearless with the most outrageous.

Now and then the two girls met in the ward, or in the passage, and conversed for a moment in low, hushed tones. Only a moment, for their self-imposed duties demanded all their time; and instead of the sight of so much suffering blunting, it only enlarged their keen sympathy, rendering it more exquisitely alive to the wretchedness to which man may be reduced.

'So Jack Mills is dead?' whispered Jenny, in awe-struck tones.

'Yes; he died swearing,' said Kate, shuddering. 'He said there was no hell, but I don't think he thought so.'

'Poor fellow!' said Dr. Dalzell, who was passing. 'Did he die hard, my dear?'

He spoke to that little waif as he might have to a daughter if he had had one.

'Yes, sir,' she said sadly. All these sorrows of hardened men and weary women were hers now. The burly doctor laid a hand on the shoulder of each little nurse.

'It is time you had a little rest, my children. You cannot hold out much longer; and if they must die without you, it may as well be while you are asleep as dying. Go now.'

'I couldn't,' said the pale waif from the Thieves' Latin. 'I want to do some good while I can; I do, indeed. I can't go away and think these poor things want me;' and more and more dawned upon Dr. Dalzell the beauty of that wan face, glorified by a sublime pity. 'Jenny, you will not?' she added entreatingly.

'I won't,' said Jenny, savagely.

'I see I must use my authority. I have half an hour or so; I shall look after the ward you belong to, and you are both to remain upstairs till I call.'

'Doctor, please, a new patient.'

The doctor sighed, and went to the speaker. It was ever thus his spare moments were taken from him; and after a few words the two girls separated to attend to their mournful duties, wondering, as they generally did at such partings, whether they would meet again, a speculation that never impaired their surprising efficiency.

'I've just put a new patient into your ward,' said cheery Mrs. Love, as she hurriedly passed Jenny. 'It's number forty-five, Miss Joice.'

On the pallet that had only just been vacated they had

laid a man. His low brow was pallid, and big drops of sweat stood out like beads. He tossed and moaned and swore, and distorted his greenish visage with ghastly contortions in the extremity of his suffering.

Ah! there is no upbraiding now, no malicious sparkle in the great black eyes, only a longing, pleading look it might break your heart to see, as the sick man tossed to and fro, moaning, between his ribald ravings, 'O Jenny, don't be so hard; forgive me, Jenny!'

The big drops rolled down with the earnestness of the supplication, with the craving for the answer that came so readily, but which he could neither hear nor comprehend.

'O father, poor father, forgive me. I forgave you long, long ago. Poor daddy, I always forgave you, though my tongue was so bitter. Won't you listen to me? Won't you hear how sorry I am? O it was a lie when I said I'd never forgive you. Won't you believe me?'

But the fever was on him, and he neither saw nor heard aught but his own delirious fancies. Again he would rave in the madness of the disease, till the poor little creature was well-nigh broken-hearted.

'She said she'd never forgive me, never in this world and the next, and she meant it. Sure, maybe, she had cause. But your mother forgave me, Jenny. Yes, she did, long ago, but you won't.'

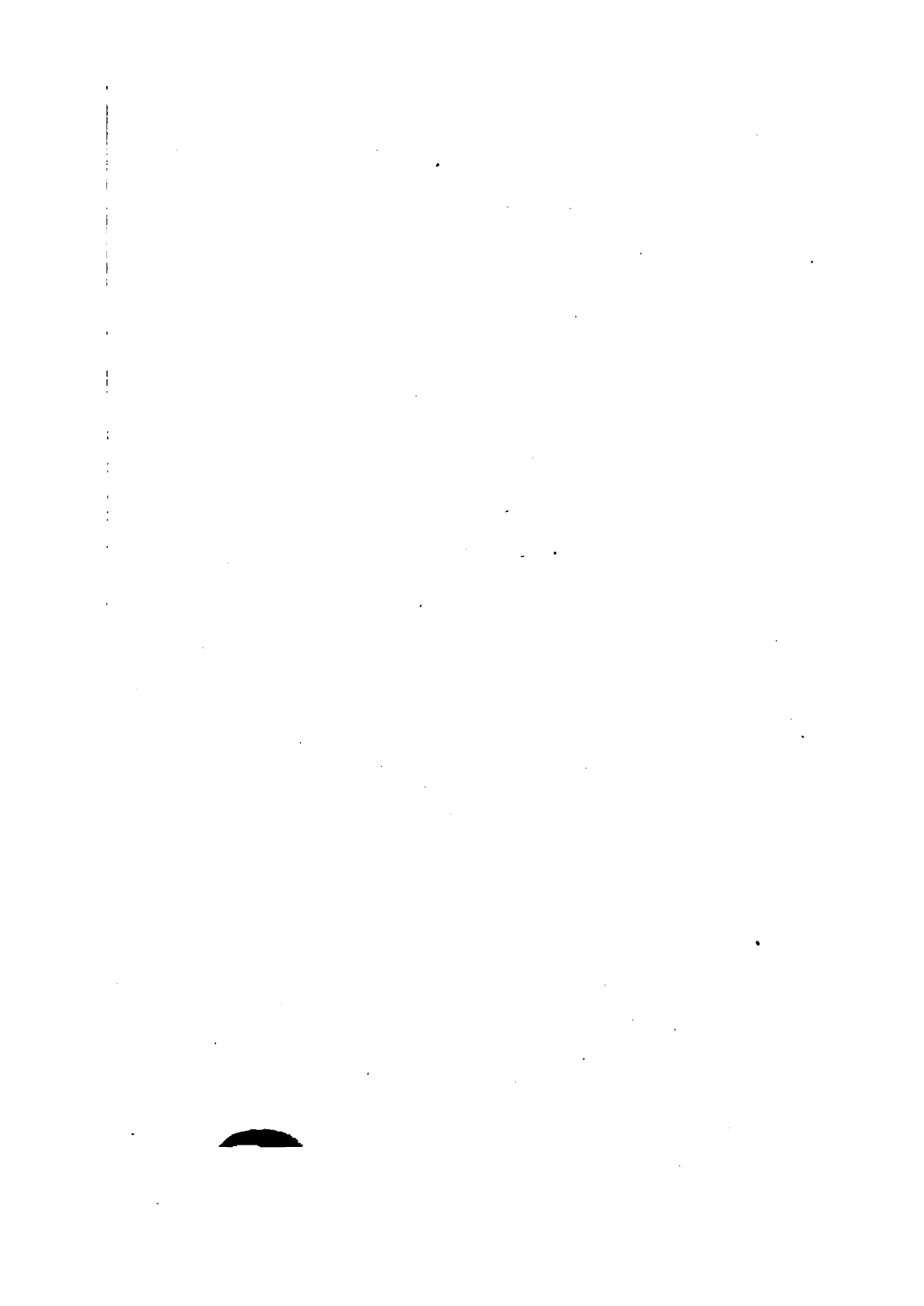
And she could not make him hear the answer to the piteous entreaty; she could not make him understand that he had been forgiven a thousand times over. The day faded into night, the night waned into morning, the sickly lights flickered and fluttered, nurses passed hither and thither, now tending a sufferer, now removing a dead body to make room for a living one. Doctors came with

their grave faces, and shook their heads at this one, and wondered that that one was yet alive ; but a hush fell on all, sick or well, who yet preserved their senses, as it spread through the ward that the little nurse tended her dying father.

The end came, came without an interval of consciousness, though she had never stirred from her post.

So the Otter died holding his daughter's hand, died without having ever heard her loving words, her passionate grief—died unforgiven !

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